# STREET SPIRIT

Volume 6, No. 4 April, 2000 $1.00

A publication of the American Friends Service Committee

JUSTICE NEWS & HOMELESS BLUES IN THE BAY AREA


# Homeless Women Find the Strength to Survive



Women from Marian Residence pose with masks from a crafts project.




This quilt was created for Marian Residence by San Francisco Quilters Guild. The legend around the border says: "The great activity of our life is to love. I see God as one act — just loving, like the sun always shining." — Fr. Alfred Boeddeker.

## Women survivors tell their stories of overcoming domestic violence, rape, evictions and rising rents

**by Marian Chatfield-Taylor**

A world where every person counts is also one where every person's story counts, and where people are free to tell their stories without shame or fear.

So it was a small victory for human rights when three homeless women told about their past, their present circumstances, and their hopes for the future at a conference on March 11 marking the 50th anniversary of St. Anthony's Foundation in San Francisco, a program that provides a panoply of health, food, housing, and rehabilitation services for the poor.

Each woman who told her story lives in the Marian Residence on Mission Street, a transitional housing program for women operated since 1996 by St. Anthony's. The women ranged in age from the early forties to early fifties. Each of their stories gave flesh and blood to the bare statistics that underscore why so many women become homeless today or live under the threat of homelessness in our rich, heartless society that purports to protect individual rights.

Each woman who spoke has survived a roster of male violence, connecting them in suffering and social trends with countless U.S. women for whom battering and sexual assault are major contributing factors to homelessness. Studies indicate that the most common reason for women to enter a shelter in the United States is domestic violence, and that women, especially with young children, are often faced with the impossible choice between staying home where their lives and their children are threatened, or fleeing and exposing themselves and their dependents to the sexual and economic dangers that can result from being tossed on the streets.

Each presenter in the workshop was introduced by Judith Pomeroy, manager of the Marian Residence, who recited statistical facts about homelessness to set the stage for the women's accounts. Pomeroy noted the fantastic rise in the cost of housing in the Bay Area, as well as the decline in jobs that pay enough to pay rent. She noted that no minimum-wage job enables a single mother to house herself and her family.

***In every state, more than the minimum wage is required to afford a one or two bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent. In fact, in the median state a minimum-wage worker would have to work 87 hours each week to afford a two bedroom apartment at 30% of his or her income, which is the federal definition of affordable housing.***

*— National Coalition for the Homeless*

Other alarming statistics show that one of the biggest barriers to leaving a violent relationship for women is having at least one dependent child, and that women face a decline in living standards for themselves and their children when they leave a violent partner.

But statistics are one thing, and women survivors of domestic violence, rape and incest telling their stories to a roomful of listeners are another. Lorraine spoke first, and she told her story with a mixture of tears, laughter, and anger that marked several of the women's strongest statements.

"I have worked since I was twelve," Lorraine began, proudly. "I had my own beauty salon, once. Then my back and my legs went out. I have a daughter I can't be with, who lives at my Mom's. My landlord rented my place out when I left home to help a friend. I was made homeless because of an illegal eviction, and I was homeless for two years.

"It took me six months to get into the Marian Residence, because there was a waiting list for people in wheelchairs. I've gone to school, for retraining. I'm 52, almost 53. My age, weight, and disabilities make it hard for me to get hired. I only have a wheelchair because of medical aid. Without the Marian Residence I don't know what I'd do. No shelter is really geared for people with disabilities."

Lorraine asked the audience to open their hearts to homeless women. "When you see someone out on the street," she said, "don't look at them like 'Oh, God, there's another one of those.' They're each one a human being. Try and help in any way. Don't forget to give them a smile and ask for blessing on their lives."

In a follow-up interview, Lorraine also insisted that every person who is homeless needs to be seen as an individual. "Each of us is a different person," she said.

Lorraine linked her situation as a homeless woman to the general problem of violence against women. "If there'd been a shelter for women and their kids when I needed one, I'd have used the help. I had to sell my business to get away from a violent man, and that business was my only source of income."

At St. Anthony's, Lorraine has become an advocate for herself and for other women with disabilities. "We are survivors," she said. "There are people we know who have died on the streets. There's nothing for people with physical disabilities. It's hard enough being a woman."

She added that it took her months after she came to St. Anthony's to develop the strength and self-confidence to begin using her skills as a disabilities advocate.

*See* **Marian Residence** *page 20*

## I AM FREE

**by Lisa Levin**

**Having failed in courtesy**
**I gained revenge.**
**Losing children to privilege**
**I kept lovers.**
**Watching my hearth**
**Overrun by the Enemy,**
**I began traffic in sabotage.**
**Being a woman nobody watches**
**I am free to record**
**The despair of my people.**

## *911 — Psychic*

**by Rosada Nolan**

**Please Miss Psychic Lady,**
**I'm scared and all alone.**
**A man tried to kill me.**
**He might be back 'fore long.**

**He hit me once before**
**But not as bad as this.**
**(I thought I was pregnant,**
**He said it wasn't his.)**

**He needed cash for bail,**
**I took him all I had.**
**He wanted more for drugs,**
**And beat me up real bad…**

**So please you've got to tell me,**
**Then I'll get off this phone:**
**Does he really love me?**
**And when will he be home?**

# PANHANDLING INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

**Society's response to poverty and panhandling is an effort to answer a deeper question: Is that person under the blanket an eyesore, a human being, expendable, or invisible?**

**by boona cheema**



**A panhandler begs the question: Are we our sister's keeper?** Lydia Gans photo

It is now the dawn of the 21st century. In the 20th century we were unable to end poverty and its most visible phenomenon, homelessness. We were unable to house, feed and adequately clothe all of our people. We were unable to sufficiently heal the wounds of our Vietnam-era veterans, treat the mentally disabled, and provide adequate health services for the addicted.

Today many of our children roam the streets, beaten and bruised. There is a sense of deep despair amongst homeless people and those who have worked in the trenches trying to find solutions while the nation continues to spend exorbitant amounts of resources caring for the displaced in Asia, Europe and Africa. At home, the refrigerators are empty; in places there is no running water; homeless people are dying in the streets of all our cities; and our children are killing each other.

I look back at my 30 years of involvement in the attempts to end homelessness. I began in 1971 as a street outreach worker and am now leading an organization which uses four proven strategies — economic development, housing, support services, and community building — as responses towards both ending homelessness and preventing people from hitting the streets.

Many efforts have been made during my time in the living world of America's homeless men, women, and children, and at policy tables and in debates about strategy and development. Some responses are working. In the absence of a consistent, comprehensive, flexible and compassionate national policy, it has been an insurmountable challenge to address the challenging, complicated, and multi-layered needs of the homeless community — especially the needs of people who land on the streets with severe disabilities and end up panhandling for survival.

We have yet to respond responsibly to the needs of our Vietnam-era veterans who make up over 30 percent of the homeless population. As the homeless community ages, we have no policy which will address their needs.

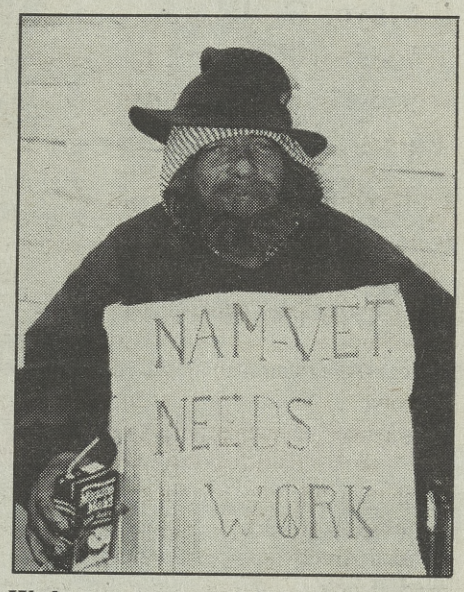
As children continue to be born in shelters, we have no clear sense for the future that they seem destined to share with the homeless Vietnam vets sleeping on the adjacent dorm mats.

If we as a nation are unable to end homelessness, do we really have the courage or the leadership to tackle the even greater problem of ending poverty?

While I've been passionately involved in building low-income housing, creating jobs, and building a safety net, there is one issue in particular which has most challenged me — that issue is panhandling. I grew up in India, where the presence of beggars is part of life and the response to a beggar is straightforward: you give, you don't give, you shoo the person away, or you ask that they watch or wash your car. But at least there is contact and exchange of some kind.

Here in the United States, I believe the human responses to the presence of "pover-

*See* **Panhandling in 21st Century** *page 17*




**We have yet to respond to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans who make up more than 30 percent of the homeless.**

## A.M. Walking Jazz

**by Randy Fingland**

**each morning**
**the corners of the city**
**fill up with the**
**fantastic sounds**
**of coins jingling**
**in paper cups**
**to signal the awakening**
**of compassion**
**in certain pedestrians**
**passing on their**
**way to work**

## AT LIVE OAK PARK
### *Berkeley, CA*

**by Claire J. Baker**

**A homeless man, "sober 16 years,"**
**(he lived under the creek bridge)**
**helped me jump-start my car's**
**dead battery. In return**
**I gave Mister Gentle some**
**leads for places to stay for**
**more than a day. We had**
**literature & loneliness in common.**
**We admired the concept behind**
**Maugham's Magnificent Obsession:**
**do a good deed for someone,**
**ask them to pass it on until**
**there's a chain reaction fusion**
**of kindnesses....**

# San Francisco Shelter Plan Attacks the Homeless

## Mayor Brown plans to charge homeless people exorbitant rents at shelters

***It appears that with a single stroke of his imperial pen, Mayor Brown will announce the transformation of San Francisco's filthy, dangerous, and crowded shelters into "rental housing."***

**by Tom Gomez**

After it was solidly rejected by a majority of San Francisco voters less than a month ago, Mayor Willie Brown and the Department of Human Services have revived a scaled-down version of Proposition E that seeks to strip homeless people of cash assistance. Details of the plan were worked out between the mayor and officials of the Department of Human Services at secret meetings held over the last few months.

News of what was discussed at those meetings was received by the Coalition on Homelessness in response to a Request for Public Information they submitted. The Coalition then held its own meeting to organize opposition to the mayor's latest crackdown on poor people in San Francisco.

But it appears that with a single stroke of his imperial pen, Mayor Brown will announce the transformation of San Francisco's filthy, dangerous, and crowded shelters into "housing." At the same time, he will end the practice of providing shelter free of charge. Calling shelters homes does not end homelessness, much as the mayor would like it to.

The plan is expected to be announced as soon as this coming week, and to take effect at the start of the new fiscal year on July 1, 2000. According to the Coalition's Director Paul Boden, "The Mayor hasn't made a public announcement and we are still in the process of reviewing the documents we received from the city."

If the City goes forward with the new plan, CAAP recipients who are homeless at the time they apply will be required to accept shelter assignments (if there are beds available) in order to qualify for benefits. The City has yet to confirm or deny that 85 percent of those benefits will be taken from their checks to pay their assigned facilities for their "housing costs."

In exchange for the roughly $300 per month that the shelter will get from each of its "tenants," residents will be provided 12 square feet of space at just under $30 per square foot, making shelter the most expensive space available for rent in San Francisco. In exchange for rent comparable only to mortgage payments on multimillion-dollar condos, the City will provide a plastic mattress with a two-feet drawer beneath it in a single-sex dorm.

Only 1,140 beds currently exist for 3,000 General Assistance recipients. To expand the number of shelter beds it has available, the City plans to build a new Bayview-Hunters Point shelter with the profits it expects to make off renting shelter to the homeless. Few of those currently on General Assistance are likely to meet the requirements or jump through all the hoops of either CAAP or the various emergency shelters (which operate under a plethora of institutional regulations that challenge all but grizzled veterans) merely to qualify for benefits they will then be forced to give back to the city.

This plan attacks the poorest San Francisco residents, taking what little money they have. It brings an end to the idea of shelter as a vehicle to help people escape homelessness in favor of the idea of shelter as a source of revenue with which to fund new construction projects.

The city will find it difficult to find tenants for shelters at $30 a square foot. At his next press conference the mayor should at least call this plan what it is and say that: Those unwilling to voluntarily go to the City's new, for-profit shelters will lose benefits; and that he is ending a cornerstone of homeless programs that have allowed people to save money for housing.

If you don't like this plan for high-rent shelters, call the Coalition on Homelessness at (415) 346-3740 to find out what you can do. Demand the City hold public hearings before implementing this plan.

Tom Gomez is a member of the Coalition on Homelessness.

## San Francisco City Hall

*(for the 169 who died on the streets)*

**by Claire J. Baker**

**The DESTINY**
**of fruits**
**can be judged**
**by their ROOTS**
**that you refused**
**even a cup**
**of water.**

## TRUTH IS A SWORD

**by Gaverick Matheny, (PEN)**

Of all federal tax revenues, 49% go towards current or past military costs. In California, the average household paid $1,610 in federal incomes taxes in 1999 for military costs alone.
Budget of the U.S. Government, Fiscal Year 1999

Fifty years ago, U.S. corporations paid about the same share of taxes as individuals. Corporations now pay about one-fourth what individuals pay.
U.S. Office of Management and Budget, 1996

Corporate profits reported to the I.R.S. were 252% higher in 1997 than in 1990, while corporate taxes roses only 191%.
*New York Times*, 20 February 2000, "Even As Corporate Taxes Fall, People Paying More to IRS"

Every year, the U.S. government gives an estimated $150 billion in federal subsidies and tax breaks to corporations.
*Boston Globe*, July 7, 1996

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# Another Black Victim, Another Giuliani Lie

**If Mayor Giuliani is elected to higher office it will be on the backs of the victims of police brutality, civil rights abuses and racism.**

**Editorial by Robert Lederman**

Immediately after the killing of Patrick Dorismond, New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani preemptively described the anticipated public reaction to yet another shooting by the NYPD of an unarmed, innocent, African-American man as biased, prejudiced, emotional and stereotyped. These terms are in fact the perfect explanation for why these shootings keep happening in New York City.

Mayor Giuliani is carrying out the racist policies of the Manhattan Institute, a right-wing "think tank" which pays pseudo-scientists to write books advancing the idea that African Americans are genetically inferior, violent and in need of being controlled by military-style policing tactics. These biased stereotypes are the basis for much of what passes as police work under the Giuliani administration. The only surprise is that these shootings don't happen every day.

Police Commissioner Safir's now-standard comment that the victim had a criminal record is shameful and disgusting, and he should immediately resign or be removed. As a result of the City's mass arrest policy, close to half of all males in New York have by now been arrested at some point on minor charges. The majority of these arrests are false, and few if any result in a conviction. Will such minor charges now be used to justify the liquidation of citizens at the hands of the police?

What Safir and Giuliani cannot conceal is that Dorismond was unarmed, and that his much-publicized criminal record, as reported by the *New York Times*, consisted of two arrests for the minor offense of disorderly conduct (the most recent in 1996), and one other arrest that had been sealed because it happened when he was 13.

Even had Mr. Dorismond, a hard-working son of Haitian immigrants whose ambition was to become an NYPD officer, been a convicted felon with a real criminal record, how would that in any way justify his being shot dead while innocently waiting for a cab after work?

As the ultimate irony, the shooting victim had just finished work for the night as a security guard for the 34th Street Partnership, a Business Improvement District with direct ties to the Manhattan Institute. The Partnership has its own history of accusations of racism and violence against minorities, homeless people, vendors and the poor. Patrick Dorismond lived in a police state, worked for that police state and was killed by the same police state.

How do you explain Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's strident insistence on defending the actions of New York police officers who shoot to death unarmed young black men in the lobbies of their own apartment buildings? It's all about reaping political dividends which translate into an increase in campaign contributions and votes. A Quinnipiac College survey of 1,842 registered voters conducted in late February shows the mayor's popularity and job approval rating significantly increased in the wake of the verdict in the police shooting of Amadou Diallo and the mayor's unqualified defense of every action by the police.

More recently, Giuliani's sweepingly indiscriminate defense of the police shootings of Malcolm Ferguson and Patrick Dorismond have provoked widespread public outrage and even some downturn in the polls; but the mayor continues to follow a deliberate strategy of appealing to the most conservative parts of the electorate by building a reputation as a hard-line champion of law and order.

Those who think Mayor Giuliani is merely insensitive to the minority community or is reflexively defending police actions because he cares deeply about police officers are ignoring the man's Machiavellian agenda. Every public statement on the Diallo case and on the shootings of Malcolm Ferguson and Patrick Dorismond this past month is coldly calculated to appeal to Giuliani's constituency: voters who are white, well-off and live outside of New York City.

While his blind defense of the police is dramatically worsening race relations in this city and virtually guaranteeing the likelihood of violent confrontations between police and minorities, Rudy is reaping the benefits.

Mayor Giuliani has built his reputation the way a developer builds a house. He started with a blueprint based on the eugenics-inspired Manhattan Institute's influential books *The Bell Curve* and *Fixing Broken Windows*. These works lay out a philosophy justifying repressive police tactics against minorities, the poor and homeless people as a cure-all for the problems of urban communities.

Underlying the ideas in these controversial works is the notion that African Americans are mentally inferior, socially defective, prone to violence and a wasteful drain on the economy. The solutions they present — eliminating welfare, zero tolerance policing for minority communities, criminalizing minor infractions, and privatizing public schools — are the operational principles behind everything Giuliani has done in New York City in the past six years.



Art by Osha Neumann

**Will such minor charges now be used to justify the liquidation of citizens at the hands of the police?**

When former Mayor David Dinkins failed to act swiftly to stop a riot by an enraged mob of black residents of Crown Heights in Brooklyn after an auto accident in which a young child was killed, Giuliani's opening to become the next mayor was assured. Giuliani eventually led a riot of his own, a police riot on the steps of City Hall in which thousands of off-duty cops chanted racist slogans, threatened and assaulted black passers-by and denounced Mayor Dinkins, New York's first black mayor.

Is Giuliani a racist? You won't come to the conclusion that this mayor is a racist simply by comparing his ideas to the KKK or to those of overt white supremacists. There's nothing in Giuliani's public statements describing African Americans as inferior. Giuliani's brand of racial prejudice is presented as a call for civic order and responsibility and as the process of making improvements in everyone's quality of life, including the lives of black New Yorkers.

The mayor's unverifiable charts and graphs graphically sell the idea that his policies have lowered crime in minority neighborhoods, cut the murder rate and saved billions of dollars. There are, however, no Giuliani charts describing the violence that his policies are doing to civil liberties or the likely social costs they will produce in the years ahead.

The shooting of Malcolm Ferguson is indicative of the real nature of Mayor Giuliani's policies and helps explain why black New Yorkers are so enraged at the mayor. Giuliani's statement that, "If we can't support our police officers in a situation like this, we can't support our police officers ever," expresses 100 percent support for the shooting without any investigation of the officers or of the circumstances.

If one accepts Giuliani's and Commissioner Safir's statements on this case, Ferguson is a career criminal with a long police record who was therefore justifiably shot by a police officer doing his job of protecting the community.

Ferguson, 23 years old, was shot in the head after running into his apartment building when confronted by a team of six undercover cops on a special "narcotics area impact team;" in other words, another version of the street crimes unit that killed Amadou Diallo.

For the mayor's supporters and apologists, Ferguson's criminal record tells the whole story; but there is another side to this shooting which shows exactly why there must be a Federal investigation into the policies of Mayor Giuliani and the NYPD, and not just into the officers involved in these shootings.

According to the New York Police Department's records, Malcolm Ferguson was not a violent criminal. He is described by neighbors as a decent young man who was trying to turn his life around. Like many young African-American and Latino males in minority communities, he made a living selling small bags of heroin and marijuana on his block. He had no weapons charges, no arrests for assault, robbery, rape or mugging. He had a total of nine arrests, his most recent for protesting the Diallo trial verdict. Amadou Diallo lived just two blocks from Malcolm Ferguson.

Nine arrests might sound like a lot to someone who is white, lives in a suburban area and works a traditional corporate job; but for minority males in NYC, nine arrests is nothing special. Although white, I've been arrested more than 41 times during the Giuliani administration, making my arrest record more than four times as extensive as Malcolm

*See* **Another Giuliani Victim** *page 19*

## FOR AMADOU DIALLO, KILLED BY THE NYPD

**by Julia Vinograd**

**All I know is what I don't know.**
**He wasn't the rapist the cops were looking for.**
**He didn't have a gun.**
**And he'll never be 23.**
**I looked at his smiling photograph,**
**he should be terrified,**
**his breath strangling in his throat**
**afraid to look up,**
**maybe the girl he's just blurted everything out to**
**doesn't care for him?**
**But he's dead, I don't know her name**
**or if he'd met her yet.**
**There's a framed picture of him**
**teaching his son to walk,**
**the child grasps one finger in each hand,**
**they're both laughing**
**and there are big toy blocks**
**scattered in the background.**
**The picture's on top of a small bookcase**
**in a house that will never be built**
**and the child will never be born.**
**How many people did the cops kill**
**when they thought he was somebody else?**
**Is that why there were so many bullets fired,**
**the 19 that hit him**
**for all the children and grandchildren**
**he'll never have**
**and the rest of the 41 for all his**
**children's lovers, wives, husbands, friends.**
**So many people in one man's skin**
**and each got a bullet with their name on it,**
**and only the name the cops had was wrong.**
**They had the name of a criminal.**
**It wasn't his name.**
**All I know about his life is his death.**
**All I know about his death is how.**
**I don't know why.**

## *Not Guilty*

— from *The New York Times*

**by Will Walker**

**Diallo, a 22-year-old immigrant**
**from Guinea in West Africa, worked**
**as a street peddler on 14th Street**

**in lower Manhattan, selling videotapes,**
**socks, gloves, and other wares**
**from his regular spot on the sidewalk.**

**A slightly built and genial man,**
**he was 5-foot-6 and weighed 150 pounds.**
**He worked 12 hours a day, six or seven**

**days a week, taking the subway**
**from the apartment that he shared**
**with a friend and two cousins.**

**He was hit by 19 of the 41**
**bullets fired. During the trial, the officers**
**acknowledged their mistake.**


## Street Spirit

**Street Spirit** is published by **American Friends Service Committee.** The vendor program is operated by the **Berkeley Emergency Food and Housing Project.**

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# Fighting for a Just Cause in Oakland

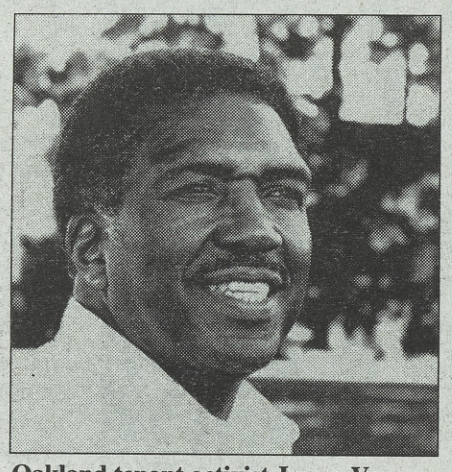
## Former populist Jerry Brown now is mayor of the landlords, evictors and big developers

### The *Street Spirit* interview with James Vann

**Interview by Terry Messman**

James Vann says it with characteristic bluntness: "Jerry Brown and Robert Bobb are two carpetbaggers wreaking havoc on Oakland."

In Vann's analysis, Oakland has been hit by a good cop/bad cop dynamic. City Manager Robert Bobb aims to eradicate "urban blight" with zero-tolerance police crackdowns on youth and homeless people, while Mayor Jerry Brown opens the floodgates to yuppies, real-estate developers and big business to gentrify Oakland into some whole other city.



**Oakland tenant activist James Vann.**

Oakland is one of the most diverse cities in California, where minorities are in the majority, but that could change under the Brown administration, Vann charges. And even though tenants are also in the majority, Oakland is run by a system that has been rigged in favor of the landlords. Over and over, they have used their political clout to block rent control measures that would benefit the majority of Oakland residents.

Now landlords are engaged in a frenzy of rental profiteering that threatens to change forever who can afford to live in Oakland. In 1999, rents for studio apartments increased by 32 percent and rents for one-bedrooms by 20 percent. Sentinel Fair Housing reported a 300 percent increase in no-cause evictions in 1999.

Activists are working to enact a just cause for eviction ordinance that would restrict landlords' absolute power to evict tenants for no cause whatsoever. By taking a petition drive directly to the people, organizers are trying to bypass a City Council which has been notoriously unresponsive to tenants, a council with a long, sleazy history of breaking its promises to enact a just cause ordinance and selling out to the landlord lobby.

The campaign needs 17,600 valid signatures by June 6 to put the just cause ordinance on the November ballot. If signatures are collected until August, they must gather a higher number — 15 percent of registered voters, or about 25,000. It is a shoestring campaign that is far outspent by the landlords, and must rely on volunteer petition-gatherers. Volunteers will make all the difference.

In Oakland, the wealth and lobbying power of the landlords seemingly has bought so much influence in City Hall that any effort to win justice for tenants is endangered from the start. It is a tribute to tenant activists in Oakland that they refuse to surrender in the face of all the wealth and power of the forces of gentrification, eviction, and dislocation.

In season and out, James Vann has steadfastly fought for justice for low-income tenants and the human rights of homeless people. An architect by profession, Vann has devoted a good portion of his life working to build affordable housing for poor and homeless people, and fighting for rent-control protections.

The measure of a man is not whether he wins all the political battles he wages. The true measure of an activist is whether he stays true to his political values for the long haul, and does the right thing without caring whether it wins friends or favors in the halls of power.




**Jerry Brown promised to develop affordable housing for poor and homeless people at this 1998 mayoral debate held by East Bay Housing Organizations. Once elected, he shamelessly broke his vows to build housing and seek welfare increases.**

**Jerry Brown is out to show that he can get rid of violence, get rid of poor people, and turn the city into a shining example of high-rise towers. Robert Bobb, on the other hand, is going to whip this city into shape by making it succumb to all of his repressive nightmares.**

**Street Spirit:** *James, you have been involved in tenants' rights causes for decades in Oakland. What is the situation facing tenants in Oakland today?*

**James Vann:** Today in Oakland, tenants face some of the deepest crises that they've ever faced. Even though Oakland is a city that has had no rent control and has suffered from highly escalated rents in the past, today the situation is such that evictions have been coupled with extremely high rents and now people are being forced out for literally no reason at all. It used to be that people were forced out of their homes because they couldn't pay the rent; now they're being forced out of their homes no matter how long they've been a good tenant, no matter how long they've paid their rent.

They're being forced out because of the greed of landlords knowing that they can rent on the market today for much more than they're getting from present Oakland tenants. So tenants are under extreme pressure and many are being forced out of the city.

**SS:** *Where does this heightened greed come from at the present moment? Is it because rising rents in San Francisco, Berkeley and Silicon Valley have now reached Oakland as well? Or is it advanced by Oakland's refusal to enact rent-control protections?*

**JV:** The greed has always been there. In past years, it was kind of under a little bit of control. Something happened that affected Oakland really severely last year. In January of 1999, an ominous new bill went into effect in Sacramento that covered the state — the Costa-Hawkins bill. The Costa-Hawkins bill was one that landlords had fought to get passed through the state legislature for 12 years.

But it had never been let out of committee until our so-called good friend, liberal Nick Petris (D-Oakland), who was in the state senate at the time, let it out of committee with his vote on behalf of it. So after 12 years, landlords finally got it out of committee, knowing with all the pressure that they have and the lobbyists and the money they lavished on the legislators in Sacramento, that when it got out of committee it would sail through and get signed by Gov. Pete Wilson, which it did.

The reason that the Costa-Hawkins bill is so ominous is that ultimately it's going to destroy any kind of rent control, no matter where, in the state. The Costa-Hawkins bill, simply stated, says that any time there is a vacancy in a room, then the landlords have a clear field to raise the rent to whatever they want, even in a tightly rent-controlled city such as Santa Monica or Berkeley.

The bill refers to a voluntary vacancy, but since there is no policing of how a tenant gets moved out of their unit, it literally translates to letting landlords raise rents any time there is a vacancy. Once a tenant moves, no matter what the reason, or gets forced out, then the landlord can triple, quadruple, whatever, that rent.

**SS:** *It applies even if the tenant is moved out by an unscrupulous action or eviction by the landlord?*

**JV:** That is true, because there's no control. Once the tenant is gone, the tenant is gone; and the only person who can say how the tenant left is the landlord, and who can trust the landlord to tell the truth in these cases? So the Costa-Hawkins bill has really opened the gates to landlords to practice unmitigated greed. Now they can put their units on the market for the highest, inconceivable prices; and if they don't get it, they're free to lower the rent until they do get it. But if they get it, all the better for them, more money in their pockets.

There is tremendous pressure on the Oakland rental market now from people being forced out of San Francisco because of high rents and people coming up from Silicon Valley who can no longer afford rents there. This unmitigated greed is just going to deprive many Oakland working people of their homes.

**SS:** *Have the rising rents and gentrification led to a rise in evictions?*

**JV:** Yes, we are currently seeing a tremendous rise in evictions in Oakland. Sentinel Fair Housing and the Eviction Defense Center both report that the number of clients facing eviction have shot up tremendously over the last 15 months.

Essentially since the Costa-Hawkins bill, we have seen a tremendous rise in evictions; that seemingly was a turning point. Before that took effect, there were about 7,000 unlawful detainers filed in Oakland each year, and it was kind of stable at about 7,000. About 70 to 80 percent of those unlawful detainer evictions were always for non-payment of rent. Now it's just the opposite. We have about 9,000 unlawful detainers being filed for last year; and of those, 80 percent are for reasons other than non-payment of rent.

It's no longer just that people have a bit of misfortune, lose a job or whatever, so they wind up in a bad spot and can't pay their rent and get put out. Now the landlords in Oakland are putting out people who*can* pay their rent, and that's a significant change.

It's even more ominous than that because 76 percent of unlawful detainers for no-cause evictions are being filed against people of color. We're gonna see with Mayor Jerry Brown's gentrification, or Jerryfication, of Oakland — where he wants to bring in people from the suburbs and people from Silicon Valley to inhabit Oakland — and the landlords meanwhile are pushing out people of color, that people of color are under a double whammy in this city at the present time. And I think you're going to see a rapid decrease in the diversity that Oakland has always known and been proud of. It's really going to hurt the way the city looks and feels.

**SS:** *Oakland has been one of the few cities where supposed minorities are actually in the majority, but this whole trend sounds like ethnic cleansing.*

**JV:** I think in another year we're going to look back and we will see the effects of these things and that's going to probably be the name we will have to put to it. Jerry denies that that's involved in his policies; so would every landlord deny that they are ethnically cleansing the city, but the effect of what they are doing is going to have the same result.

If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, what is it?

**SS:** *It's a damn duck (laughing).*

*In San Francisco, landlords now have to use some fairly sophisticated subterfuges to evict people, such as owner-move-in evictions, or they have to get tenancies-in-common to purchase the building. Even those sneaky evictions are under attack by tenant rights' activists.*

*But in Oakland, a landlord doesn't need to do an owner move-in eviction, or even come up with a just cause at all.*

**JV:** Right. In Oakland, a landlord needs no reason at all. If there is a reason — non-payment of rent or a hazardous situation where a tenant pulls a gun on a landlord or something — the landlord can give a three-day notice. But for other cases, all a landlord needs to do is just give a 30-day notice. In other words, a landlord can at any time come up to any tenant in Oakland and say, "In 30 days, I want you out." That's irrespective of how good a tenant you've been. It was this specter — the growing number of evictions, the evictions that had no reason at all, and were basically because of greed — that we felt compelled to put forward a just cause for eviction ordinance.

**SS:** *Oakland has seen several past attempts to create just cause ordinances.*

*See* **Just Cause in Oakland** *page five*

# Just Cause in Oakland

**The Jerry Brown that we knew as governor of the state, as son of Edmund G. Brown, as talk-show host on KPFA, is dead. There is no semblance of that Jerry Brown any more.**

*from page four*

*Often the City Council members had a massive failure of nerve or broke campaign promises to enact just cause. That's why you're taking it directly to the people with a petition drive?*

**JV:** You're exactly right. In 1991, we thought we had elected a majority liberal-progressive City Council, many of whom had campaigned on the fact that they would enact or support a just cause for eviction ordinance. When they came into power, and we presented them with a just cause ordinance, one of our most liberal new council people put it off to a committee of landlords and tenants to fight it out, where it languished for 13 months.

After it came back, of course, in that period of time, the landlords had the opportunity to lobby those same so-called liberals, promised them money for their campaigns if they would vote against just cause. So when the landlords felt that they pretty much had control of the council, they finally announced in committee that, "We're not going to go for any changes; we don't want to see any just-cause ordinance, so we're out of here. You can take it to the council if you want."

Which we did, and we got zero votes — even though we had six members of the council who had said they would support it. The person who was sponsoring it on the council, Natalie Bayton, abstained on her own motion; she didn't even have the guts to vote for her own law.

**SS:** *So in a sense the effect of landlord greed is infectious, because they have the kind of political clout and money to infect campaigns in Oakland. They can make the council members, even the supposed liberals, cop out on their principles.*

**JV:** You know, it's amazing. I looked at those campaign reports after the elections in '92, and some of those council people only got $500 from the landlords. They sold out their whole constituent base for $500! Such a cheap price, and these were so-called progressives and liberals.

So this time, we're doing it differently. The Oakland Tenants Unions got formed again and with more energy and younger people who are really concerned about the growing atmosphere of antagonism towards tenants. Right from the beginning, the coalition of groups that came together to form a tenants unions said, "We're not going to take it to the council. We're going to take it to the people."

**SS:** *They found no hope at all in the present council or in Mayor Jerry Brown?*

**JV:** Jerry Brown came out immediately and said he was against any kind of just-cause ordinance. He said he's against just cause because it would make it difficult for landlords to evict people.

**SS:** *It may make it harder for landlords to evict good tenants, but it doesn't stop them from evicting tenants who don't pay their rent or damage their property. Brown must want landlords to have an open season to evict anyone they want.*

**JV:** He wants an open road for landlords to evict. He wants no constraints. In fact, he has said to the business community that if there are any roadblocks in Oakland to their coming in and doing whatever they want to do, let him know and he's going to get rid of them.

**SS:** *What do you make of that? When Jerry Brown ran for president in 1992, he talked about refusing corporate money and called his campaign "the insurgent sword of the poor." In other words, he was going to fight an insurgent battle for justice for the urban poor (laughs). He then came to KPFA as a progressive talk-show host and seemed to share a lot of the movement's principles. But after his election as mayor of Oakland, we haven't heard a word of concern about homelessness or poverty. We just hear about attracting 10,000 yuppies to live in market-rate housing. Has his supposed concern for justice disappeared?*

**JV:** The Jerry Brown that we knew as governor of the state, as son of Edmund G. Brown, as talk-show host on KPFA, is dead. There is no semblance of that Jerry Brown any more. The Jerry Brown that we have in Oakland today is a power-hungry egomaniac. The Jerry Brown we have today talks to nobody in Oakland, seeks no advice, and wants no feedback.

He does not attend council meetings. He doesn't know what the voice of the community is about. He talks about how he met with 150 community meetings during his campaign and he heard the voice of Oakland. Well, he just uses that to say, "I've mixed with the community." There has been no mixing since he took power. Since he took office, he goes to no meetings in the community. He asks for no advice. Jerry's on a total power-trip.

He has never mentioned the plight of the homeless or doing anything to help homeless people. In fact, the City is not going to renew the lease for the Henry Robinson Multi-Service Center.

**SS:** *But that multi-service center is the only one of its kind in Oakland, and provides transitional housing for about 200 homeless people...*

**JV:** Well, they're now on a month-to-month lease and can be evicted at any time. They're presently at full capacity and every room is filled, with around 220 homeless people. They're all candidates for eviction under this mayor.

Jerry Brown has not said anything in support of homeless people, nor even in support of affordable housing. What Jerry Brown has actually done is go to Sacramento when he was proposing his 10,000 units of new housing to find out if he could put forward this plan without including *any* affordable housing. Specifically, he asked that question. And with developers who are now coming into Oakland, Jerry Brown has gone to them and told them, "I want no affordable housing in your development."

Jerry has taken a totally anti-Oakland attitude. The recent primary election on March 7 was very revealing. The people in the flatlands, except for a few precincts in the Fruitvale district, all the other precincts in the flatlands voted down Jerry Brown's proposed takeover of the school board. [Measure D, which passed narrowly, gave Brown the power to appoint three members to the school board.]

But the measure was voted for in the hills. And so the hills, which have a higher turnout even though there's fewer precincts and fewer people in the hills, carried the measure. In West Oakland and East Oakland and North Oakland, Jerry Brown's measures and his candidates lost. People in the flatlands, working people, the mainstay of Oakland, were trying to give a good message, but they were overruled by the hills.

**SS:** *So basically Jerry has transformed himself into a mayor of the hills, a largely white, affluent area.*

**JV:** That's exactly right. And he has shown no concern for the issues and the problems of the flatlands. He has not spoken to them and he just doesn't care. He turns his back on everything that the flatlands asks for. So we got shot in the back by the election of Jerry Brown. Frankly, I think Jerry is too dangerous for this city. I think that in no way should he ever be re-elected. The mark he's made on this city is going to be terrible for a very long time.

**SS:** *Has he pretty much united most of the African-American community against his policies?*

**JV:** Yes he has. Nobody in the Black community now speaks glowingly of Jerry Brown any more. Although many people in the Black community voted for him because they thought that with his vision and with what they know about his father and the progressive things he did as governor, that he would be a good fit for Oakland, a refreshing change. But the person they thought they elected is nothing like the Jerry Brown they got.

**SS:** *With City Manager Robert Bobb, another initiative that Jerry Brown has presided over is a zero tolerance campaign against so-called blight in Oakland, which many of us are afraid is secretly modeled on Rudolph Giuliani's no tolerance campaign in New York City. Usually those very people that mainstream society is intolerant towards — poor people, street people, youth, minorities, the unemployed — are the first to be hurt by these zero tolerance police crackdowns. Have you seen that as a problem in Oakland?*

**JV:** Yes, as a matter of fact, this whole thing of Jerry Brown and Robert Bobb is a case of two carpetbaggers coming into Oakland and wreaking havoc on a city. Bobb knew nothing about Oakland, knows nothing about Oakland. He's come in here as a marine sergeant, going to whip this city into shape, and puts out

*See* **Just Cause in Oakland** *page 19*



Photo by Dong Lin from his book, *One American Reality*

**In Oakland, 76 percent of unlawful detainers for no-cause evictions are being filed against people of color. With Mayor Jerry Brown's gentrification, or Jerryfication, he wants to bring in people from the suburbs and from Silicon Valley to inhabit Oakland; and the landlords, meanwhile, are pushing out people of color. So people of color are under a double whammy in this city at the present time.**

## 2000

**by Mary Rudge**

**It's 6 a.m. and the scavengers up and down**
**the street pick through trash.**
**There'll be no breakfast**
**if something's not found. There'll be no lunch**
**or any other meal if something's not found,**
**more than a few**
**aluminum cans of trade value, thrown away**
**hamburger scraps, core of an apple. All**
**the soup lines now extend for blocks,**
**waiting for 8 a.m. No one else can be fed here,**
**not even for compulsory prayers.**
**Old prayers that fed people**
**have failed, the prayers that**
**got them off the streets and under roofs,**
**not under bridges or in doorways or on**
**sidewalks with a lucky piece of cardboard.**
**And the God of jobs and neighbors,**
**the God of milk and plenty,**
**rice, potatoes, beans and coffee,**
**the God of cornfields and tomatoes**
**waits, expectant, on the**
**corners**
**as the oil-slick cars go past**
**with others feeling their**
**pockets' bulging billfolds,**
**on their way to make munitions.**

**In the strongest, richest,**
**cleverest — they tell me —**
**country of the modern world.**

# Homeless Protesters Occupy Plush Hotel Lobby

**Protesters set up a soupline in the Fairmont Hotel's opulent lobby to emphasize the contrast between San Jose's red carpet treatment of rich developers and its utter failure to act on affordable housing.**

**by Robert Norse**

San Jose's Community Homeless Alliance Ministry (CHAM) switched gears from traditional civil disobedience to soup-serving street theater on Sunday, March 5. Ministers led nearly 100 homeless women and men, community supporters, and church members into the lobby of the plush Fairmont Hotel in downtown San Jose to emphasize the unmet needs of the poor.

After a church service at First Christian Church, Rev. Scott Wagers and Larry Sweeny struck the third blow in recent weeks against an indifferent City administration. The multiracial group staged a five-block march from their regular weekly Sunday service straight into the heart of San Jose's upscale downtown — an area increasingly hostile to homeless people.

The new regime of Mayor Ron Gonzales has refused to give even token attention to the needs of San Jose's nearly 20,000 homeless people and has refused repeated requests from CHAM to meet with its members to form long-term plans for housing and immediate homeless needs.

CHAM protesters charge Gonzales with failing to develop housing for people living on the streets of a city awash with Silicon Valley wealth. Police violence in the last year has spread terror (eight shootings, seven of them fatal) in a city that has no meaningful civilian oversight of law enforcement agencies.

The Sunday march was the third action of CHAM's "Poor People's Campaign," organized in the spirit of Martin Luther King's historic civil rights campaigns of the '50s and '60s and Oakland's legendary Union of the Homeless housing takeovers of the late '80s and early '90s.

CHAM's previous two actions included a sit-in at Mayor Gonzales' office on January 26 and a dramatic appearance before the entire San Jose City Council on February 15. At those two events, homeless people and their housed backers insisted on staying as politicians ducked out and sent in uniformed police officers to remove the embarrassing protesters under the glare of heavy media coverage.



Homeless people gather for food at First Christian Church before embarking on a march for justice through downtown San Jose.

Police arrested and later released the "we shall not be moved" activists, issuing a total of 41 citations at the two protests on charges of misdemeanor trespass and disrupting a public assembly.

The unrepentant protesters showed up in court twice in March to answer the charges and to demand full legal representation and speedy jury trials in a bid to discourage the use of the police force to sweep the poor out of sight. Those going to court face charges that could result in $1000 fines and up to two years in jail (for those arrested at both protests).

At the third protest on March 5, Rev. Wagers led supporters from First Christian Church, the Affordable Housing Network, local labor groups, and Santa Cruz's HUFF straight into the spacious central lounge of the Fairmont Hotel without a murmur of apology or a glance backward. Protesters carried with them a five gallon bucket of hot vegetable soup and an ample supply of sandwiches and drinks which they distributed to every hungry person who asked for food.

The march put the homeless spotlight on the $35 million subsidy the Fairmont Hotel has received from the San Jose Redevelopment Agency while nearly 20,000 homeless people are unable to find or afford shelter. Faced with stonewalling from Mayor Gonzales and his City Council, the picnicking protesters set up a modest soup line in the Fairmont's opulent lobby to emphasize the contrast between the City's red carpet treatment of rich developers and its utter failure to act on affordable housing.

Before setting up the mid-day meal, CHAM reserved a $270 room for the night for a homeless family in one of the cheaper rooms above. The subsequent occupation included a luncheon, a prayer service, an informational picket, and a mass march upstairs to the reserved room.

Nancy Chase Nichols, a CHAM co-founder, noted that the Fairmont lobby and its bathrooms are actually open to the public as a little-known requirement for the Redevelopment Agency's multimillion-dollar corporate welfare handout to the hotel. Some soup sippers smilingly suggested that the luxury hotel owed homeless people at least six months of lodging to make up for the five years it should have been open as a public resource (hotel managers had never publicly announced this obligation).

"Maybe we'll do this every Sunday," mused Paul Schusser, who had come over from Santa Cruz to support the protest.

Bernie From, an out-of-work audio engineer, noted the walk was worth it just to see the shocked expressions on the security guards' faces.

"My wife and I met at the shelter and married at the shelter," he said. "We've had two houses. They've both been foreclosed because somebody wanted to build something more expensive there." Without affordable housing, From emphasized, "Silicon Valley will not have people to pump their gas, wash their clothes, take

*See* **San Jose protest** *page 17*

## Solar Eclipse

**by Chris Trian**

**Because the sun is homeless,**
**a man with a swastika on his arm**
**walked into a day care center**
**and shot the little children.**
**Because the sun is homeless,**
**a white man, mad at the world,**
**bought him some guns**
**and set out to Cal-i-for-ni-ay**
**to kill him some Jews.**
**Because the sun is homeless,**
**he didn't realize that**
**everyone is Jewish in the world today.**
**Lost, wandering, hunted like animals,**
**fighting for a homeland, when there**
**AREN'T any more "homelands."**
**We are all in exile from the source.**
**Because the sun is homeless,**
**our ancestors push shopping carts**
**through the streets.**
**Compassion has been evicted.**
**We are all homeless in our beds tonight.**
**Small, greedy men with cardboard souls**
**hold the crucible of our survival**
**like a tiny bird in a huge fist.**
**We don't need conspiracy theories.**
**Everything is a conspiracy against reason.**
**Because the sun is homeless,**
**the stars are orphans**
**and we are all lost.**
**Cursing, fumbling in the dark,**
**like drunks looking for their keys.**
**Rednecks of desolation,**
**mad at the darkness,**
**shooting out the light,**
**because the sun is homeless.**

# Sleeping Ban Protest Prompts Mayor and Council to Walk Out

**Sleeping is outlawed in the city, so more than 20 people, many clad in blankets, lay down on the floor and turned the council chambers into a last-ditch sanctuary.**

**by Becky Johnson**

On March 28, protesters came to the Santa Cruz City Council to speak out against the draconian Sleeping Ban and the increasing harassment and suffering of homeless people. About 100 people showed up to demonstrate against the City Council's unwillingness to decriminalize sleeping at night despite the closing of the largest shelter in Santa Cruz County on April 1.

"The homeless have waited long enough for a good night's sleep," said Robert Norse of HUFF (Homeless United for Friendship and Freedom). The City's Homeless Issues Task Force has unanimously called for "suspension of ticketing under the Sleeping Ban pending the establishment of Safe Zones for the homeless."

Santa Cruz Police Chief Steve Belcher documented 51 reported assaults against homeless people in 1999. The Homeless Services Center, the Santa Cruz County Coroner, and HUFF documented 19 homeless deaths in 1999. Sleeping Ban activist and AIDS sufferer David Silva is in day 28 of his fast to end the Sleeping Ban. Yet no new shelter has opened for homeless people since July, 1998.

Protester James Nay, speaking to the City Council from the public microphone, asked Mayor Keith Sugar, "Will you vote now to place the Sleeping Ban on the agenda tonight as an emergency resolution?" Mayor Sugar remained silent.

Trying to force the recalcitrant mayor and council to respond to their demands to end the Sleeping Ban, more than 20 people, many clad in blankets, lay down on the floor in front of the podium, a visual statement to the council that since sleeping was outlawed everywhere else in the city, the council should itself become a last-ditch sanctuary. In response, Sugar recessed the meeting. SCAN Housing and Homelessness Subcommittee Chair Tom Shaver joined those lying on the floor.

Presenters for the Living Wage Ordinance sought to have access to the podium so Mayor Sugar could reconvene the meeting and have the City Council consider an ordinance which would require the City to pay its own workers more. Protesters moved aside and urged the speakers to take the podium and proceed with the meeting. But instead, Mayor Sugar permanently recessed the meeting and the entire council vacated the chambers.

For the next hour and a half, under the watchful eye of Police Sgt. Vogel and Officer Brandt, protesters and community members listened to a presentation by Sandy Brown and Bob Fitch of the Coalition for a Living Wage, followed by a question-and-answer period. Fitch detailed that the City of Santa Cruz employs 388 temporary positions, which involve ongoing work at an average wage of $8.68 an hour. The Coalition is recommending $13 an hour for employees who also receive medical insurance and $14 an hour for those who don't.

Despite the abrupt closure of the council meeting, which prevented the Coalition for a Living Wage from presenting their proposal to form a Living Wage Task Force, Coalition members graciously expressed solidarity with the Sleeping Ban protesters.

"Santa Cruz has the second highest cost of housing in the nation," a Coalition member told *Street Spirit*. "All the people in the Coalition believe homeless people should be provided safe spots and the right to sleep at night. We believe that having a roof over your head and having a way to make a living are basic human rights."

Following the informal presentation on the Living Wage Ordinance, the protesters then discussed the Sleeping Ban and what tactics should next be employed to end the anti-homeless law against sleeping and covering up with blankets. No arrests were made and no pies tossed.

## No Man Is An Island

**by Michael Creedon**

**Why am I concerned about**
**All these homeless people on the street,**
**The needy, the poor, the diseased,**
**When I've got so many problems**
**Of my own?**

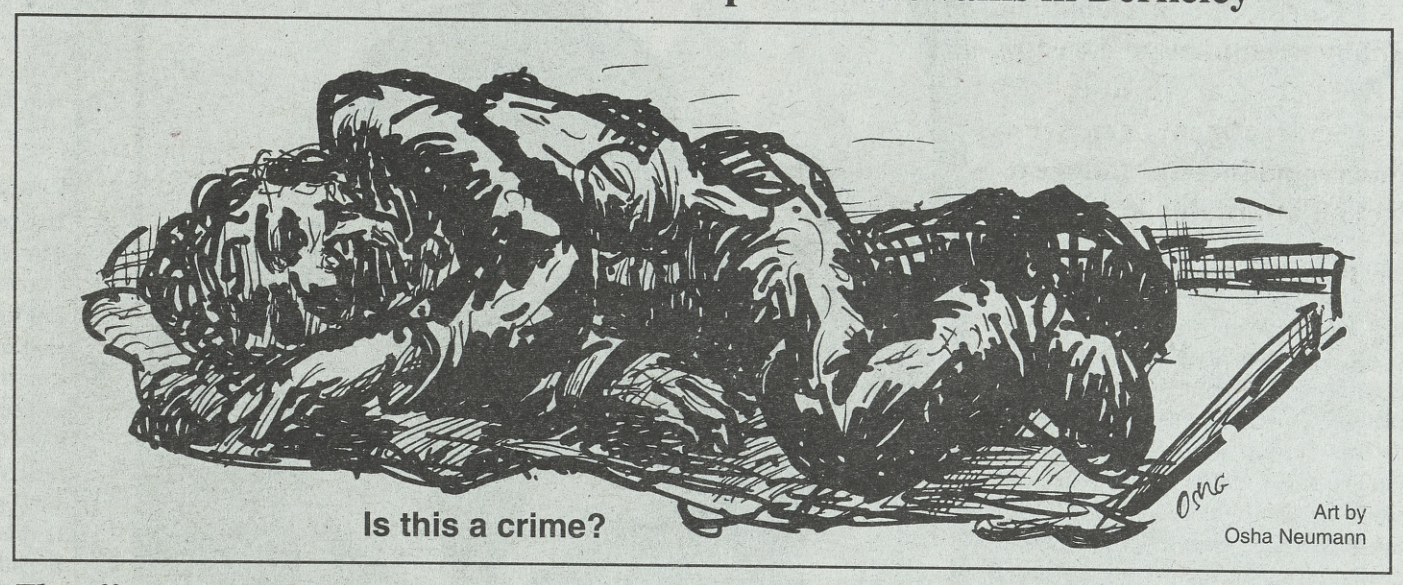
**John Donne said it well,**
**"No man is an island."**
**Well, dammit, it's true.**

**But I keep acting like an island,**
**Isolating myself, disconnecting myself**
**From my brother.**
**I wish I didn't do that.**

# Homeless People Need Not Fear Merchants' Warning Signs

## Despite what business owners claim, it is not a crime to sit on public sidewalks in Berkeley

**by Osha Neumann**




***The efforts of merchants notwithstanding, Big Brother doesn't own the public sidewalks — yet.***

### WHAT DO ALL THE NUMBERS MEAN?

Up and down Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, stores have posted "No Trespassing/Private Property" signs in their windows with strange letter/number salads on them, warning people not to sit or lie next to the building. You're led to believe that the numbers and the letters provide the legal basis for the warnings.

They don't. **It is not a crime to sit against a building.**

So what do all those letters and numbers refer to? Here's the key to the puzzle:

**BMC 13.52.010** is a Berkeley municipal code trespassing ordinance. It prohibits "Entering upon posted property" and says: "It is unlawful for any person to enter or go upon or pass over or remain upon any land of another where the person entitled to the possession thereof... has posted... printed notices that said land is private property and warning all persons from trespassing thereon."

Why doesn't it apply?

Simple: You can't trespass on a public sidewalk or area opened to the public (such as the plaza in front of Cody's) no matter who technically owns it. If the area has been opened to the public for pedestrian use, the owner of the property can't forbid people from sitting on it (as long as they are not intentionally blocking other people).

Property lines often meet in the middle of the street. This doesn't mean that the owner of a piece of property can decide anyone using the street is a trespasser. Technically the city "owns" the right to public use of most streets and sidewalks. (It's called an easement). The constitution, by the way, provides the highest degree of protection for free speech and assembly on public streets and sidewalks "wherever the title... may rest."

**BMC 13.52.020** is another municipal trespassing ordinance. It prohibits: "Entering upon property after being personally forbidden to do so;" and says that you can't "enter or go upon or pass over or remain upon any land of another after being personally forbidden so to do by the owner... or... an agent." This is just like the other law, except instead of a sign telling you to go away, you're personally told to leave. Again, property owners have no right to tell you to get off property that's been open to the public.

**BMC 13.36.010** prohibits "Obstructing free passage of persons or vehicles in public ways." It says you can't "intentionally stand, sit, or lie in or upon any... sidewalk... so as to prevent the free passage of persons... over, along or across the same." Such municipal obstructing statutes have been held by the courts to be constitutional only as applied to people who purposefully block the way. Just taking up space that someone else might theoretically stand in is not a violation.

**PC 602.1** is a state penal code section which forbids "obstructing or intimidating business operators, public agencies or customers." It says a person commits a misdemeanor if that person "intentionally interferes with any lawful business... by obstructing or intimidating those attempting to carry on business, or their customers," and who, after being asked to leave, refuses to do so. If you're just sitting by the side of the building, you're not obstructing or intimidating anyone, and this doesn't apply to you.

**PC 602 (j)** is another penal code section which makes it a misdemeanor to "lodge" someplace without the permission of the owner. No one knows what lodging is, and the statute is so vague it ought to be unconstitutional. Whatever it means, it doesn't mean just sitting against a building.

So how come you're being told to "move along" whenever you park your butt next to a building? For this you need some history. Back in 1995, Berkeley enacted an ordinance making it illegal to sit within six feet of a building in a commercial zone. The ACLU promptly sued the City and won an injunction against the enforcement of the ordinance in a Federal court which found the law violated the First Amendment right of assembly and free speech. The City appealed the ruling.

While the case wound through the courts, a new City Council was elected which repealed the ordinance in its entirety. The police (and some merchants) have never accepted that the law isn't there anymore. They decided they could get the same results by threatening people with the letter/number salad that's been posted up and down the Avenue.

So don't be fooled.

**It is not a crime to sit against a building.**

I repeat: **It is not a crime to sit against a building.**

Now how you deal with the cops is up to you, but if all you're doing is sitting against a building, and there is plenty of room for people to pass by, and you're not hassling people or blocking an entranceway, you should beat the rap.

## FOR PEOPLE'S PARK

**by Julia Vinograd**

**Each night light from dead stars**
**still shines**
**because it's been so long.**
**Each day a ghost girl with my shadow**
**waters the flowers in People's Park**
**still young**
**because it's been so long.**
**The cyclone fence we tore down**
**so many times with wire cutters,**
**screams and our bare hands**
**still stalks the park,**
**a beast with teeth and claws**
**because that much rage doesn't rest.**
**Ghost tanks tear at our throats.**
**Drug burns with burning tear gas.**
***And any second, fights***
**even when we're eating free food**
**or listening to music.**
**Time's funny, in the park;**
**we are what we were forever.**
**The roots of these flowers go down**
**to the other side of the sky**
**because it's been so long**
**and sometimes we shine.**
**Make a wish.**

# S.H.O.C. Is a Persistent Defender of Sacramento's Homeless

**by Max Biddle**

After a successful rally for homeless causes on Martin Luther King Jr.'s holiday, the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee (S.H.O.C.) has moved on to become more involved with homeless issues in Sacramento. Our involvement and media presence has become so visible to the general public that our opinions and complaints to the police department and the media are no longer ignored.

No matter how frustrating it may appear to some officials, S.H.O.C.'s complaint process has also produced some positive outcomes. The police are well aware now that homeless people are more and more using S.H.O.C. to carry their complaints to the Police Accountability Office; in response, the police are communicating on a regular basis in an attempt to handle these situations better.

County officials, the Police Accountability Office, and the Downtown Partnership (which oversees the Community Service Guides who generally harass the homeless in downtown Sacramento), now meet in S.H.O.C.'s office on a monthly basis to review their activities and conduct in dealing with the street people. The reason for this concern by the authorities is the growing access we have to media coverage.

Much has been done and a lot more has to be accomplished. Already, many community leaders in Sacramento — including Thomas Clinkenbeard of the public defender's office, Sacramento Housing Alliance President John Foley, Steve James of the *News and Review* and mayoral candidate Julia Padilla — have expressed amazement at the amount of influence we have garnered in such a short time.

The recent campaign for mayor was an opportunity that proved very beneficial to S.H.O.C.'s cause. One of the candidates, Julia Padilla, put forward S.H.O.C.'s name and cause at every meeting and debate she had with the other candidates.

Our prominence in the community has been attested to by the U.S. Census Bureau asking our help in making sure that homeless people are included as much as possible in their count in the Sacramento area. Also, S.H.O.C. has set up a voter registration drive to get the homeless back in the political process.

S.H.O.C. recently launched a clean-up campaign of the Sacramento River that received extensive television coverage. Channels 3, 10, 31 and 40 sent their crews out for the beginning of our clean up; it was by all accounts the best coverage that the homeless community had received recently. The media coverage of this campaign pointed out for the first time to the general public that all the garbage along the Sacramento River was not the responsibility of just homeless people. We were able to explain that old cars, tires, discarded refrigerators, tires and household articles hardly belong to the homeless.

This was in direct contradiction to the police department's campaign to blame the homeless for these problems. The Sacramento Police Department has been attending meetings with different neighborhood association and presenting a slide show showing garbage and refuse that was supposed to have been left by the homeless. Their presentation was so biased as to be shameful.

S.H.O.C. now has obtained several scheduled appearances at these same neighborhood associations to present the other side of the story.

In an attempt to ensure that homeless shelter residents are treated better than in years past, S.H.O.C. has become a member of the advisory committee overseeing the conduct of the Salvation Army's overflow winter shelter program. S.H.O.C.'s participation was especially helpful in keeping toilet facilities clean. It also resulted in more courteous dealings with homeless people seeking shelter.

The response of some public officials to S.H.O.C. has become more positive. The response from State Senator Deborah Ortiz and Assemblyman Darrell Steinberg has made it clear that our concern about police abuse of the homeless community is a serious matter that cannot be ignored. S.H.O.C. pressure on local officials will continue to be a constant that the authorities will not be able to ignore.

Max Biddle is the treasurer of the

# Artists Bucking the Odds 2000

**Commentary by Rhett Stuart**



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

San Francisco had been a haven for artists and a model to the nation pertaining to their productive lives. The historical priority of American materialism is a false value-system not characteristic of the artist. It remains an infantile side of this young nation, largely starting from parents who subtly infer or openly postulate that "you're not a good person" without impressing your neighbors in monetary display; when in truth, your neighbors don't give one hot damn about you.

The corporate world is necessary and, most certainly, one valid choice for individual livelihood; its people and productive practicality, essential. But essential to what? To the freedom for real beauty onto everyone's existence.

True success is defined as those who are successful in contributing as human beings. Productivity goes with the package; and artists illustrate for us, from their gifts, the depth of this life we live. Wealth of goods is not their aim. Security to be themselves and to realize their potential, is.

Overnight, what had served as wealth has become essential for simply "making it." Has the yuppie viewed hippie predecessors and concluded that the philosophic aspect of that generation's inference that "anything goes" as far as appetites and drugs, did not work? Are they that insightful and introspective? But that was only part of the picture and they've gone much too far to the other extreme.

Virtuosos who made San Francisco worth coming to are being driven out by exorbitant rents. They have served as a strong reason people called this The City. "The City that knows how(?)"

They took positions in the workplace and did an honest job at work that did not deplete energies for what was important to them and what they were about. Just having enough for well-deserved security was the point, and this was how it was possible to be worked. Not in some far off fairyland, but so very recently; just the other day. Amazing! Certainly you believe it deserving of vast commentary.

Colorful little rooms, now no longer affordable, were occupied off San Francisco alleys by serene active minds, deep and devoid of vapidity and greed. I can attest to it personally. One of them was myself. Talents fired up, as beneficial to all.

Last week a delivery man who is an artist said to me, "We have a mayor now who intimates if you don't make fifty thousand dollars, you don't deserve to live in San Francisco," and added, "He's just going to continue enjoying 'the party'."

Recently I heard someone comment that it's going to get worse. And it feels as though the nation is in a likened state, while San Francisco is no longer a model for any of it. But Artists, You are!

Writers, write! I know you WILL! Artists, buck-the-odds-Year-2000!

Continue giving! Continue give! (I mean, don't let them get you.) We're together. We count and God knows it.

## FIRST PERSON SINGULAR

**by Rhett Stuart**

**Politician like abusive parent using you for own gain game**

## Downside Survival

**by Rhett Stuart**

*[Prologue: Have you current concerns and even worries? You are not what happens to you but how you deal. You know those perfect moments you revere and relive for the rest of your life? That is who you are are. That is why you revere them.]*

**Love spiritual off family and intimates.**
**Dreams basked.**
**These, his upside.**
**Donwside, incessant verbal child abuse.**
**Balding while singing young.**
**Political firing from eleven-year job.**
**Street gang beating of no ground.**
**Subsequent slugging off maniac.**
**Loss of loved ones dead.**
**Geographic loss of alive ones.**
**Basil cell carcinoma.**
**Is this another?**
**Breath loss startled to triple bypass.**
**Wrangle of today's inordinate**
**subordinate, exorbitant rent**
**force-feeding sharing.**

**Once moved well in crisis**
**till instructed him to fall apart.**
**Each life has tragedies.**
**The longer a one, the more have arrived.**
**He would not exchange his personal wonders**
**for not having had the tragedies.**
**Small wonder his upside**
**in the constant small immediate**
**unto all-time memoir harbour**

**of boyhood movie palaces with an**
**organ between showings.**
**Mother piano accompanying his voice**
**for jam sessions through afternoons**
**or nightlife.**
**Tidewater music room filled sheet music.**
**River beach below with a dog**
**and dreams of New York.**

**In Shenandoah Valley the daily train**
**arrives Winchester over brook**
**streaming through town.**

**Then Munich attic ironing board**
**desk for story board.**

**Debarks train on nightfall Venice water**
**responding Grandma's graphic.**
**Top of Capri over Sorrento at sundown**
**with Italian shopgirl then**
**town plaza at dark**
**resembles Cavalleria Rusticana.**
**At Seventeen he learns**
**Michelangelo by Florence view.**

**Sophistication of 29 West 82nd**
**front windows off Central Park**
**accompanying instant coffee**
**and recorded blues sax.**
**Heading out Christmas Eve to spend it**
**alone with Auntie Mame at Radio City.**

**Siamese and typewriter off window on**
**Russian Hill servant alley and**
**pretended self as Gene Kelly in Paris**
**and smiling freedom of scarcity**
**that squeezes the tenspot**
**to add days of the same,**
**meeting artist companions.**

**On Sonoma ranch kitchen view,**
**one solitary cow**
**lights suns of his writing days.**
**All for him was symphonic neon and cowlick,**
**Big Sur musical bluster**
**and its quiet vivid**
**stars reigning down.**
**Kiss remains cheek.**
**Tock of clock not spent.**
**Tick and tock, neon and weed.**

**He is early dreamer then transcending**
**sweet memories into them too.**
**He is his selective,**
**the monologue penning here on**
**dove off one more kitchen glass**
**breathing life to sideswipe crude Muni driver**
**encountered the mere more recent yesterday.**

# Poor Leonard's Almanack

*Quotations and Original Thoughts*
**by Leonard Roy Frank** ***Street Spirit*** April 2000

### ON CHARACTER

To be thoroughly good-natured, and yet avoid being imposed upon, shows great strength of character.
JOSH BILLINGS (American humorist, 1818-1885), *Everybody's Friend, Or; Josh Billing's Encyclopedia And Proverbial Philosophy Of Wit And Humor*, 1874

Character is a journey, not a destination.
BILL CLINTON (American president, 1946-), quoted by Joe Klein, "The Politics of Promiscuity," *Newsweek*, 9 May 1994

Character—the willingness to accept responsibility for one's own life—is the source from which self-respect springs.
JOAN DIDION (American writer, 1934-), "On Self-Respect," *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, 1969

Character is that which can do without success.
RALPH WALDO EMERSON (American philosopher, 1803-1882), "Character," *Essays: Second Series*, 1844

Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wings, those who cheer today will curse tomorrow; only one thing endures — character.
HORACE GREELEY (American editor, 1811-1872), quoted by Clark M. Clifford, "The Presidency As I Have Seen It," in Emmet John Hughes, *The Living Presidency*, 1972

Resistance, whether to one's appetites or to the ways of the world, is a chief factor in the shaping of character.
ERIC HOFFER (San Francisco longshoreman-philosopher, 1902-1983), *The Ordeal Of Change*, 1964

Nothing discloses real character like the use of power.
ROBERT G. INGERSOLL (American lecturer, 1833-1899), "Fragments," *The Philosophy Of Ingersoll*, edited by Vere Goldthwaite, 1906

Character is much easier kept than recovered.
THOMAS PAINE (American political philosopher, 1737-1809), *The Crisis* (pamphlet), 19 April 1783

The fate of a people depends much more on their character than on their intelligence.
GUSTAVE LE BON (French sociologist, 1841-1931), *Aphorisms Of Present Times*, 1913, translated by Alice Widener, 1979

Underneath this flabby exterior is an enormous lack of character.
OSCAR LEVANT (American pianist and actor, 1906-1972), *The Memoirs Of An Amnesiac*, 1965

Character is what emerges from all the little things you were too busy to do yesterday, but did anyway.
MIGNON McLAUGHLIN (American writer, 1915-), *The Second Neurotic's Notebook*, 1966

Standing for right when it is unpopular is a true test of moral character.
MARGARET CHASE SMITH (Maine senator, 1897-1995), speech, Westbrook Junior College, Portland, 7 June 1953

Character is formed by an interaction between a person's heredity and his response to his environment.
ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE (English historian, 1889-1975), *The Toynbee-Ikeda Dialogue*, 1976

Conduct and character shape each other.

Our character is revealed less by the hand we're dealt than the way we play it.

The measure of character is virtue.

**********

*The title of this column derives from Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanack. Leonard Roy Frank is the editor of Random House Webster's Quotationary, a collection of more than 20,000 quotations chosen by amazon.com as one of the 10 best reference works for 1999.*

# SIGNS OF THE TIMES — ECCLESIAL DISOBEDIENCE IN OAKLAND

**We do not need oversized, vacant churches that cost millions of dollars. We need a church with a transformed heart would serve the poor and marginalized just as its founder Jesus did.**

**by Kim Wayne**



Art by Fritz Eichenberg for *The Catholic Worker*

**Many homeless people have joined in celebrating Eucharist with the women who created *A Critical Mass*. At our Masses, there are no doors to shut anyone out. An inner-city park was selected to indicate our solidarity with the homeless, some of whom live in this park.**

The weather stations forecast rain on February 20. Yet the sun was warm overhead when the small band of Roman Catholic women arrived at Bishop Begin Plaza in Oakland. The plaza, an inner-city park across San Pablo Avenue from the Greyhound bus station, stands on the site of the Oakland diocese's demolished cathedral. Damage from the Loma Prieta earthquake spelled the cathedral's demise.

Each third Sunday of the month, this group of women, which calls itself *A Critical Mass: Women Celebrating Eucharist*, comes to this shabby little park to do just that: to publicly celebrate Eucharist, the Roman Catholic Mass.

Some would call this heresy. Some sacrilege. But this group, well-trained in their church's traditions, calls it ecclesial disobedience. In defiance of their church's rules, they claim the priesthood bestowed by their baptisms but denied to women by the hierarchy of their church. Each month the women, along with the congregation gathered, recall the story of Jesus feeding his disciples with his body and blood. They do this as Jesus asked them to — in memory of him.

From Gospel stories, we learn of Jesus' compassion for the poor and underprivileged. One story claims that he multiplied a few loaves and fish to meet the needs of a hungry group. For the women of *A Critical Mass*, breaking bread with the poor is a key part of their ministry.

Since their first public Eucharist in October, 1997, all advertising for *A Critical Mass* requested participants to bring food each month to share with neighboring Saint Mary's Center which feeds the elderly. In addition, for the past year, members brought sandwiches, eggs, fruit and drink to share with the park residents.

The need to share bread with the hungry was obvious: spiritual nourishment does not take the place of physical food. However, the task of providing both material and spiritual food became quite overwhelming. It was then that the Brothers and Sisters of the Company of the Paraclete appeared.

This ecumenical group, formed on the East Coast in 1971, dedicates itself to the most marginalized people in our society. This tiny group, comprised of six lay men, one woman member of *A Critical Mass* and an ordained priest, graciously offered to expand the food ministry in the park. Aided financially by Hayward's St. Vincent de Paul Society, they will provide a substantial lunch every third Sunday of the month at 12:30 just before *A Critical Mass* begins. All are welcome.

But back to February 20, the day of the first *Critical Mass* of the new year. The women completed their standard park clean-up and began decorating a bit with small flags, despite feeling a few drops of rain. When Victoria, one of the group, sought help carrying the sound system, a young man named Anthony volunteered. Anthony was not a regular at these monthly worship services. In fact, he had never even been in this park before. Later on he would tell us his story how he happened to be in the park to worship with us that day.

A light rain began at just about 2:00 p.m., the time Mass started. We abandoned our usual wide open space for the shelter of trees. Umbrellas popped open. The crowded, protected condition, rather than hindering worship, created a palpable intimacy for all gathered.

"Transformation of the Heart" was the theme of the day's worship. Five women enacted the Gospel story in which four friends of a crippled person went to extraordinary lengths to have Jesus heal their friend. They ripped tiles off the roof of a home so that they could place their sick friend at Jesus' feet. They persisted on their friend's behalf until Jesus not only forgave the person's sins but also physically healed the paralytic.

Anthony was overwhelmed both by the healing scene and the theme of a new heart. You see, Anthony had just been released from a hospital the previous week. He had suffered from congestive heart failure and was not expected to live. In such a weakened condition, what had brought him to this park on this particular Sunday?

This young man did not have energy enough to cross the street to the bus station. He had entered the park to rest a bit and gather strength before returning "home." Home for him is Richmond's Rescue Mission, an emergency shelter where he intended to go by bus.

Like those featured in the January and February issues of *Street Spirit*, here was a young man in desperate need of respite care. Without health insurance, he had no recourse but to spend days on the streets waiting for admittance time at the shelter. Here was a man in need of healing. Here was a man truly in need of a new heart. The drama of the liturgy had touched him deeply. He shared his story with the gathering.

Anthony is one of many homeless people who have joined in celebrating Eucharist with the women who created *A Critical Mass*. At our open air Masses, there are no doors to shut anyone out. Open space was selected so everyone would feel welcome. People have no need for special clothes when they gather in a park. All are welcome and each of us is enriched by the presence and sharing of others. An inner-city park was selected to indicate our solidarity with the homeless, some of whom live in this park.

We have deliberately chosen to gather at the site of the former Oakland Cathedral. We also believe it was not purely accidental that this cathedral was damaged so severely that it had to be demolished. One of the Vatican II documents encouraged believers to "read" the signs of the times: to look for evidence of the Holy Spirit urging growth and new direction in our lives. We believe the collapse of the cathedral is one such sign.

We do not need oversized, vacant churches. We do not need to spend millions and millions of dollars on a large new building which might be filled two or three times a year. Nor do we need a church "art gallery" with valuables that need to be locked up and protected. Rather we need cathedrals without walls: gatherings of people who call themselves church. This church with its own transformed heart would serve the poor and marginalized just as its founder Jesus did.

As our worship service ended, the skies let loose. A torrential downpour sent everyone scurrying for protection. Fortunately, one participant offered to get Anthony a quick meal and a ride back to his shelter. Rain or shine, we will be at the park each month. Whether you hunger for bread or hunger for a world founded on sharing bread with all the people, you are welcome every third Sunday at our Cathedral without walls.

A *Critical Mass: Women Celebrating Eucharist* takes place at 2:00 p.m. every third Sunday of the month at Bishop Begin Plaza at San Pablo Avenue and 21st Street in downtown Oakland across from the Greyhound Bus Terminal. Lunch is served at 12:30.

## Things They Don't Teach In School

**by Will Walker**

**Opening the heart**
***—a complex mathematics—***
**Opening the heart**
***—a delicate syntax—***
**Opening the heart**
***—the world of the single syllable, love—***
**Clearing the mind**
**Breathing with the wind**
**Smiling with the sun**
**Weeping like the rain**
***Opening the heart***

## STREET EASTER

**by Julia Vinograd**

**People made of thorns stumble down the street,**
**even their rumpled clothes scratch**
**where they touch.**
**Red hurting lines.**
**Cry iodine tears into paper cups,**
**put bandaids on your eyes,**
**look away, look away.**
**Bramble vine shoelaces come undone.**
**Thorn music, horn music**
**twisted as old arthritic fingers,**
**hands nailed to the nothing in them,**
**anything they say hurts.**
**Don't listen.**
***Walk away, walk away.***
***Thorns made of people stumble down the street;***
**there are no crowns.**

## HOW TO STEER TOWARD A DREAM

*(for Chaplain Chris of San Rafael)*

**by Claire J. Baker**

**Steer relaxed… Steer hardly at all.**
**Let the "Big D" ripen in**
**inspiration's south, ripen slowly**
**in the mouth, a long hot cocoa**
**to clear away the nightly fog.**

**Focus shiny-eyed on love's citadel.**
**Accept that on reaching**
**the lofty iron door, a key**
**will need to be fashioned.**

**How to nurture a dream, Chris.**
**Christen it with tears**
**and a lyrical name, hold it in**
**your arms, bear-hug that miracle**
**guest into your very essence**
**as you are doing,**
**as you have done.**

## The Day We Celebrate

**by Will Walker**

**I remember interrupting the minister**
**at the Easter service, though I can't say**
**exactly how I got there, or why.**
**Remember the way the feeling rose up in me,**
**a need to testify, to raise my voice, to say,**
**Easter is a time to celebrate. Easter**
**is the time Christ rose from the dead.**

**It's Friday, Good Friday when we**
**saw him crucified, stood idly by**
**and watched Him thirst and bleed and die.**
**Friday is the day we mourn our part**
**in seeing Him led to sacrifice, but Easter —**
**Easter is the day we celebrate His rising**
**from the dead to become the living God.**

**Easter is the day we sing Hosannas**
**to His name. The minister blinked**
**in a kindly way and let me speak.**
**He knew, though I was right, I'd never**
**sing hymns with his congregation again.**

# The Way of the Hate Man in a Bizarro Universe

## Stepping into Hate Man's world is akin to stepping into the Mad Hatter's tea party, or the Bizarro universe from *Superman* comics.

A lot of people think they know who "Homeless People" are. They have sort of a stereotypical view of who the "Homeless Person" is. I guess then the Hate Man is your typical, dress-wearing, former *New York Times*-reporting, hatred-spewing, homeless freak. A legend among Berkeley street people since 1986, Hate Man defies easy description. Raving wingnut or profound street-philosopher? You make the call.

Certainly among the most resourceful and self-sufficient of street people, Hate Man has survived — and even flourished — on the streets for over a decade without getting any kind of check or relying on charity agencies of any kind. And yet Hate Man manages to live like a veritable "King of the Streets." (Or is it "Queen?")

Most evenings you can find Hate Man and his merry band of hate-cronies, street lunatics, and assorted hanger-outers on the University of California's Berkeley campus. Ever the uncongenial host, Hate Man usually sets up his own makeshift "living room" on the streets, replete with crates to sit on, a table with candles and flowers, and plenty of day-old coffee and whatever ground-scored refreshments were found that day.

The "Hate Scene" is sort of a floating men's smoking club — part Andy Warhol street-theatre of the bizarre, and part Primal Scream/Gestalt Therapy encounter group session. It has a surreal logic all of its own. Stepping into Hate Man's world can feel akin to stepping into the Mad Hatter's tea party, or the Bizarro universe from *Superman* comics. I suppose it all makes perfect sense if you're nuts. At the least, it provides a waystation and a late-night social scene for many street people who would have nowhere else to hang out.

Hate Man is also noteworthy for having developed his own unique philosophy centered around "acknowledging negativity." He feels society has gotten out of balance by "trying to have a nice day" — by stressing the positive and repressing the negative. To this end, Hate Man has championed the cause of restoring the yin-yang balance of the Universe by delivering a hearty "FUCK YOU!" to the world. Is it any wonder I hate his fucking guts? The dress-wearing, shoulder-pushing, dirty, rotten sunuvabitch.



**The Hate Man is a legend among Berkeley street people, but defies easy description. Raving wingnut or profound philosopher? You make the call.** B.N. Duncan photo

**Hate Man is your typical, dress-wearing, former *New York Times*-reporting, hatred-spewing, homeless freak. The Hate Scene is part Andy Warhol street-theatre of the bizarre, and part Primal Scream/Gestalt Therapy encounter group.**

### Interview by Ace Backwords

*March 8, 2000 midnight. The deserted UC Berkeley campus.*

**Ace Backwords:** *One thing that separates you from a lot of street people is that you originally became homeless by choice. Would you say that's not typical of most homeless folks?*

**Hate Man:** Well, I don't know. Because I feel in some way if I'm a person who's living outdoors, I'm choosing to remain outdoors rather than kill myself or figure out a way to get back indoors. I agree that a lot of people are forced, or pressured, by circumstances, to be outdoors.

**Ace:** *You were a reporter for the New York Times at one point, correct?*

**HM:** Yeah. I was normal for like 35 years.

**Ace:** *What was it that made you go a different direction?*

**HM:** I think I just decided to nut up. I was successful being normal. But I just decided — not consciously — that this isn't everything. This is a lot of work! Then I spent the next 29 years nutting up. And I wanted to stretch it out. Because if I did it too fast I could get locked up or beaten to death.

*(Schwiller, a street person who's been repeatedly interrupting us, shows up and starts mumbling at Hate Man.)*

**Schwiller:** I'm making a demand for a light.

**HM:** SHUT UP! I'M TRYING TO DO THIS INTERVIEW ONE-ON-ONE! PUSH IF YOU WANT TO BE HERE! YOU'RE BUGGING ME!

**S:** I believe I'm not bothering Hate Man. I love Hate Man.

HM: THEN YOU DO THE INTERVIEW! I'M NOT DOING IT IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE HERE INTERRUPTING! I'm leaving. *(Hate Man leaves.)*

**S:** I was just going to push Hate Man for a cigarette and he's getting all upset. He's like a vision of a dream of a beautiful person.

**Ace:** *Do you have any problem with him getting angry like that?*

**S:** Sometimes he scares me a little.

**Ace:** *Here, I'll give you a little wine if you'll go somewhere else while I interview Hate Man, okay?*

**S:** I guess.

*(Schwiller leaves; Hate Man returns.)*

**Ace:** *Push for a cigarette, Hate Man, you dirty, rotten, hateful sonuvabitch.*

**HM:** Slimy, fucking, motherfucking asshole. *(We push shoulders for a minute until Hate gives in and gives me a cigarette.)*

**Ace:** *Okay. That scene with Schwiller was definitely a facet of your outdoor life — having to deal with all these street characters.*

**HM:** Oh definitely. That's partly why I like the outdoor scene, because I'm vulnerable. And I want to come to terms with all kinds of energy. With everyone, and different angles. Knock knock. I'm learning more about dealing with people.

**Ace:** *How about social reactions to being a — quote, unquote — "bum." CBS News did a feature on you with your Mom. What did she say?*

**HM:** The *CBS* person said: "Your son used to be at the *Times* and now he's living outdoors, eating out of the trash. What do you think about him now?" My mother looked away from the reporter, away from the camera, and said: "Now he's a bum!"

It's correct. I am a bum. And I'm comfortable with the term. I mean, some people have an attitude about bums. Which I can understand. If I'm an indoor person and ambitious and everything, then I can be afraid of bums or have an attitude that bums are worthless. But I feel that's a person's problem who has that attitude. I mean, it could be a problem to me if I'm dealing with the person.

Every now and then though, I talk to an indoor person who treats me like a person: You're a person, I'm a person. That is such a relief. Most indoor people I talk to look at me like, "Eww! Gee! This guy is weird! This guy is crazy! This guy is a bum!"

I have all these filters in there. I realize: OK. I'll be wanting you to say, "I hate you" and push with me, and be straight with me. So I feel these things that I'm doing are ways to cut through attitudes over a period of time where you, the person, will start to think of me as a person. Adult to adult. Knock knock. But sometimes, I'm on the street and a car will drive by and people will be looking at me cross-eyed. I'm used to that.

**Ace:** *You're also unusual on the street scene in that you're more self-sufficient than most street people. You don't get any kind of check. You don't go to the free meal places. Is there any philosophical reason for that?*

**HM:** Well, I'm doing what I feel strongest about, so I prefer just digging in the trash to find what I need. To me that's simpler. I feel a lot of the social agencies are a parent/child set-up, where the agency decides what I'm going to get, what food you're going to eat, and when I'm gonna get it. Often times I feel the agencies expect me to be grateful or say "t.h.a.n.k. y.o.u." I prefer the trash. It's floating down the river. I don't owe anybody anything.

**Ace:** *I often see young street people sort of floundering around, and I've often felt it would be informative for them to just spend a day walking around with the Hate Man just to see how you operate, so it would give them some tips on how to survive comfortably out here.*

**HM:** I feel street people are pretty fucking resourceful. Someone that's living outside is taking care of themselves, whether it's with a check or going to a free meal or whatever.

**Ace:** *To me, that's a lack of resourcefulness. Because they're using other people's resources to get by.*

**HM:** I don't put the person down for doing it. I don't feel comfortable doing it. I feel it's a major step just to go outdoors.

**Ace:** *I'm not putting them down for it. But I think one of the big resentments that society has about street people is the fact that they are not taking caring of themselves. Whereas you take care of yourself.*

**HM:** Well, there's certainly resent-

*See* **Surreal Way of the Hate Man** *page 11*

## Diogenes in a Dress?

Street artist Richard List offered an interesting comparison in discussing the Hate Man's philosophical lineage. After explaining that he is wary of saying anything too positive about Hate Man for fear of, well, being hated, List said: "I would say the Hate Man is like Diogenes. The problem is that he doesn't want you to say anything positive about him, but I would say he has some saintly qualities. He is perhaps an ascetic."

Diogenes was an ascetic Greek philosopher who taught that the virtuous life is the simple life, a belief he dramatized by living in a tub. Diogenes condemned the corruption of his contemporaries and is said to have wandered through the streets of Athens with a lantern, looking for an honest man. What a royal pain! Still, as List reminded us, Alexander the Great once said, "If I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes." Whether Alexander the Great would also trade his world-historical status for the identity of a dress-wearing, homeless Hate Man, history is silent on that point.

In his former life, Hate Man worked for the *New York Times*. Fellow *Times* reporter Michael T. Kaufman wrote about his colleague's metamorphosis from a straight life as an Air Force officer, Peace Corps volunteer, and *Times* reporter into a long-haired, dress-wearing, shopping-cart-pushing, homeless drummer in Berkeley. Kaufman described his reunion with the Hate Man in "Notes From Underground," a 1991 article for the *New York Times Magazine*. Hate Man had sent Kaufman a postcard that showed him "bearded and wearing a skirt, as a fixture on the campus."

Kaufman wrote: "Recently, in late autumn, I was in the San Francisco area and set aside a day to find my friend. It turned out to be easy. The first person I showed the postcard to said, "Oh, the hate man," and directed me to where I could expect to find him. In less than an hour I spotted him as he pushed his shopping cart up Telegraph Avenue, checking out garbage bins. We embraced. When I invited him for some coffee, he left the cart on the street. I asked him if he wasn't worried about leaving it like that. 'It's true that it contains all my worldly possessions,' he said, 'but it's OK to leave things.' He told me that he has slept for some years in the corner of an unheated garage and that he forages for food in the trash bins of pizza shops....

"As we sat together, once more enjoying conversation and argument, students would occasionally approach and good-naturedly call out, 'I hate you.' My friend would reply, 'I hate you, too.' As the afternoon wore on, he told me he had to go join a group of conga players, tapping out his rhythms on an upturned plastic pail. 'I think everybody has their own rhythm, and I have found mine,' he said as we hugged and shook hands."

# The Surreal Way of the Hate Man



**The Hate Man's drum-circle on the UC Berkeley campus brings folks together to vent the storm within and find camaraderie by drumming.** Ace Backwords photo



The Hate Man demonstrates a novel approach to conflict resolution by pushing hands with Maylie Scott of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship at a People's Park gathering. In the Hate Man's code of "caring while being opposite," people can be free to both differ and get along. When two persons disagree or have a conflict, they resolve the matter by pushing shoulders together (or sometimes hands).

B.N. Duncan photo

*from page 10*

ment there. And I feel in some ways the outdoor thing is over. The Yippies had a funeral for the last hippie in '67 or whatever. And I think somebody could have a funeral for the last outdoor person. Society has basically changed its attitude about outdoor living. And from now on, it's touch-and-go.

**Ace:** *You feel there's more of a squeeze now on the homeless people?*

**HM:** Oh, definitely. I feel it's a major crunch. An outdoor person has to adapt and flex because of the pressure. Not be as obvious.

**Ace:** *How long have you been living outdoors all together?*

**HM:** For awhile I had a garage. So somebody might say: "You weren't really outdoors." So it depends on how strict of a definition. But I'd say 10 years or so. I came outside in '86.

**Ace:** *And you also work.*

**HM:** Yeah. I do a janitorial thing a couple days a week to pay for cigarettes. That's basically the only thing I buy. I feel the most creative thing about an outdoor person is: Ordinary society, for thousands of years, has been what I call "social reality," where people take their identity from their group — family, clan, small town, racial/religious groups. And I feel we're switching to "personal reality." Groups are losing control.

*(Schwiller returns.)*

**Schwiller:** Hate. Push for a cigarette.

**HM:** Okay. I HATE YOUR GUTS DOING THIS WHILE I'M TRYING TO DO AN INTERVIEW! *(Hate Man and Schwiller push shoulders, standing side-by-side and pressing against each other with their shoulders.)*

**Ace:** *Maybe you could explain the concept of "pushing shoulders" while you're pushing with Schwiller.*

**HM:** Well, I call this whole system "oppositionality." Can I care when we're opposite? That's the hardest time to care. So, on the verbal level, I feel the way to stay in there is to say "Fuck you." "I hate you." "I'm pissed."

On the physical level, pushing shoulders is a way for us both to feel how important it is for the other person. I can feel how important it is for you to get the cigarette by how hard and how long you're willing to push. And you can feel how important the money is to me. At some point during the push one of us is going to give up. *(Hate gives in, stops pushing and gives Schwiller a cigarette)*

**Ace:** *Would you say being on the streets has given you more freedom to be who you really are?*

**HM:** Oh yeah. I feel moving outdoors is a major step in seeing what I am, apart from a group.

**Ace:** *But you still end up becoming part of the group of street people.*

**HM:** But that's an affinity group. That's a group I'm choosing to associate with. But getting back to that other thing: If I accept help for being "down and out," I have to play a certain social game there, and please you. That's why I prefer eating out of the trash.

**Ace:** *Also, you have to keep being more fucked-up all the time in order to get more help. That reinforces their fucked-upness. That's the one thing about the street scene that I really hate. "I'm so fucked-up. Help me." They use that as their primary survival mechanism. Not that I mean to disparage the street people who are genuinely fucked-up and need help. But some of these guys perhaps could be encouraged a little more to help themselves.*

**HM:** Right. It rewards the person for being fucked-up. Which keeps them in that head-space.

**Ace:** *That's the whole syndrome of getting a check, and the free food places.*

**HM:** It reinforces in thinking that I'm helpless… It's 1 a.m. I'm going to the cafe. *(Hate Man leaves; comes back in 15 minutes with two large jugs of hot coffee.)*

**Ace:** *Tell me the deal with that cafe.*

**HM:** This is a place that gives us coffee at the end of the night that otherwise you would throw away.

**Ace:** *You've developed other trips like that: getting the leftover pizza when Greg's Pizza closes, getting potatoes from Spud Brothers, getting day-old pastries.*

**HM:** Yeah. This is delicate, though, because I don't want to come in with an attitude of "You owe me!" I hate that when somebody asks me for a cigarette and comes in with that vibe of "You have cigarettes. I need cigarettes. You should give it to me."

**Ace:** *That's another big trap I see so many street people fall in. That "you owe me" attitude. They play on that. It's sickening. And I think it's been ingrained in some of these people by spending their lives going to social service agencies demanding service for doing nothing.*

**HM:** And of course it works with some people. I'd rather work. If I didn't have cigarettes, I would rather mop floors than push for one.

**Ace:** *Oh yeah. I'm the type, before I would ask someone for a quarter, I would go around to every pay phone and check all the coin slots. There's a sense of freedom to being self-sufficient.*

**HM:** Yes. Definitely.

**Ace:** *Would you like to talk about the so-called "Hate cult" — the group of people that are around you that sort of go along with your trip to some degree. Are you surprised at how that evolved?*

**HM:** Well, I hope that the way that I'm operating will be taken up. I'm hoping, actually, that the whole world will do this eventually. Not because of me, but because it works better than the other ways we've tried. I'm pleased that other people are doing this.

**Ace:** *One thing I find impressive about your trip: You have a good sense of where the line is drawn; how far you can go. And then you'll push it just a little bit over that line to see how much space you can make for yourself. Like setting up the drum circle every night in the middle of the campus. A lot of street people sort of tip-toe around feeling they don't fit in, they don't belong anywhere. Whereas you*

*See* **The Hate Man** *page 18*

## Free Gilda The Shopping Cart

**by Julia Vinograd**

**The cops impounded the Hate Man's shopping cart.**
**The Hate Man who won't trust you unless you tell him you hate him, his answer to the love movement.**
**The Hate Man wears one sneaker and one high heel and a woman's bra, gray in his beard, a twinkle in his eye and various hats that look like puppies or an antique chandelier.**
**And always with Gilda, his non-denominational shopping cart.**
**This morning I signed a petition to free Gilda, the latest political prisoner, probably being beaten and raped in jail.**
**All the shopping carts of People's Park play on Gilda's bars, like children on jungle gyms.**
**The Lamb of God is in the Hate Man's shopping cart, a stuffed toy with white curls and black button eyes. And the Hate Man pulls it out to heckle the street preachers, waving it in their faces, yelling thru a megaphone made of a paper cup with the bottom torn out and demanding we all worship the sacred zucchini while rattling Gilda's wheels for emphasis.**
**Gilda, mother of Jazz, her dumpster radio has no batteries, it runs on mojos, chicken feet, voodoo statues, twisted straw dolls, twisted straw people.**
**The cops run them from every doorway, steam grating, bus bench, hole in the ground till one of the holes is in a clarinet and they come out playing the Blues.**
**Shopping carts become flying saucers with a faster-than-light drive discovered by rubbing squashed beer cans against old Christmas tree ornaments and a plastic plant with dust on its leaves.**
**Gilda can get us to Mars if we can only get her out of jail.**
**The world's going to hell in a bucket, I can't save the world, I'll save the bucket, the shopping cart.**
**Free Gilda!**

**The *CBS* person said: "Your son used to be at the *Times* and now he's living outdoors, eating out of the trash. What do you think about him now?" My mother looked away from the camera and said: "Now he's a bum!"**

**TWISTED IMAGE** by **Ace Backwords**



# Jubilee 2000 Resists 'Ruthless Economic System'

**"The law of profit will not help the majority in the world to climb out of the deep well of poverty into which they have been plunged by a ruthless economic system whose main driving force is profit and greed."**

— Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, Cape Town, South Africa

Cape Town Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, a prominent backer of Jubilee 2000, gave this stirring address at a four-day South-South summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, which brought together over 120 Jubilee campaigners from Africa, Asia and Latin America who are seeking a debt-free start to the new millennium.

Archbishop Ndungane's presentation is a brilliant socioeconomic analysis of the exploitation of hundreds of millions of hungry and unhoused people in the Third World by the financial elites in the rich, industrialized nations. Ndungane's impassioned call for activists everywhere to resist the injustices imposed on the poor by global corporations and the international banks is especially timely now. Activists are planning April mobilizations in the Bay Area and in Washington, D.C., to call for a Jubilee 2000 year of debt cancellation and to oppose the austerity measures of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). [See sidebars about these upcoming protests.]



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

**We want an end to government by the bankers, of the bankers, for the bankers. We want for the people of Africa, Latin America and Asia, what Abraham Lincoln wanted for the people of the United States: government by the people, of the people, for the people.**

**by Rev. Njongonkulu Ndungane,**
*Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa*

It's a great joy to be here with you; to see so many faces from different parts of the South. Friends I know well from Africa, and friends I first got to know in Honduras, after my visit there to witness first hand the devastation of Hurricane Mitch. It's a great pleasure for me to welcome our friends from Peru and Bolivia here to South Africa.

I was so sad to hear recently, on the first anniversary of Hurricane Mitch, that Nicaragua and Honduras are still spending as much on debt service as on reconstruction of their devastated economy — that while Western government creditors have declared a moratorium on payments, these poor countries still pay the IMF and World Bank $1 million a day.

I think of my friends there, of the devastation of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, of the ruined homes, the people buried by the floods, of the flattened banana plantations — and my heart cries out at the heartlessness of the international financial institutions in Washington.

Many of you are caught up in the heat of battle against an international financial system that so impoverishes the majority of people of the South, while enriching elites in both North and South. Struggling to raise awareness of foreign debts and economic issues amongst ordinary people, many of them illiterate, and most of them living in deep poverty. I salute you for work that you are doing to raise awareness amongst millions of ordinary people — awareness of the foreign debts their countries owe to the world's richest countries.

Your work and your struggles are essential if we are to educate the masses of our people in the workings of an international financial system which enriches the few, and impoverishes the many. To transform that system we need to educate, mobilize and organize in support of our objectives. What are these objectives?

**First:** massive and immediate cancellation of the unpayable debts of the poorest countries of the world. That, now, thanks to the long struggles against the debt, both here in Africa, but also in Asia and Latin America, is now accepted.

Building on our struggles in the most indebted nations, the worldwide Jubilee 2000 movement has emerged in much the same way as the anti-slavery movement in the West grew out of the resistance of slave communities in Africa and the Caribbean.

Thanks to this worldwide Jubilee 2000 movement, as President Clinton acknowledged in his speech to the IMF in September, there is now "a global consensus" for debt relief. We need to recognize and acknowledge the work that has been done in the North, to apply pressure on Western governments, by Jubilee 2000 campaigns in those countries. We need to acknowledge that the global consensus did not emerge out of thin air; it has been constructed through struggle and resistance in our indebted nations; and through the tremendous mobilization of public opinion in countries like Britain, Germany, Italy and the U.S.

**Second,** we need new economic systems: economic systems which put people, not profits first. I would like at this point to say how much I welcomed the statement the Pope made when he gave his personal backing to the international Jubilee 2000 delegation that met with him in Castelgandolfo in September, 1999.

He said, and I quote: "The law of profit alone cannot be applied to that which is essential for the fight against hunger, disease and poverty. The Catholic Church... has consistently taught that there is a 'social mortgage' on all private property, a concept which today must also be applied to 'intellectual property' and to knowledge."

The Pope is right. The law of profit — it has already been proved — cannot put food in the bellies of the millions of mothers, fathers, children, grandparents, workers, the millions who hunger and starve, here on the African continent, in Latin America and in Asia. The law of profit will not allow them the drugs they need to treat the most stressful and appalling disease known to man: AIDS. The law of profit will not help the majority in the world to climb out of the deep well of poverty into which they have been plunged by a ruthless economic system whose main driving force is profit and greed. That is why we need new economic systems which place human values at their center, not money values.

Nobel Peace Laureate, Professor Amartya Son, has emphasized that the validity of any economic policy should be judged on whether it takes into account its impact on people who are on the downside of the economy. He says that it is necessary to bring social deprivation into the domain of public discussion and create systems for social opportunities. A guiding principle in designing an economic policy that has, as its major focus, the well-being of humanity is the witness of the common good. In so doing we would ensure that communities and individuals benefited.

**Third,** we need economic systems based on respect for nature and the environment, for wildlife and plant life. Economic systems which recognize that there is a "social mortgage" on all property. Such economic systems are deeply embedded in traditional African culture and practice, as they are in the centuries-old experience and practices of the campesinos of the plains and forests of Latin America. Traditional practices dismissed and undermined first by colonization, by the slave trade, and now by globalization. We need to have the confidence, we in the South, to believe in our own traditions; in our deep knowledge and understanding of our environments. We need to assert our right to control over those environments, and not have them stripped, logged and drained by transnational corporations from the North.

Professor Klaus Nurnberger from the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, wrote in *Prosperity, Poverty and Pollution:* "Economics is too important to be left to economists. Responsibility for the economic and ecological well-being of humankind rests with the entire academic community, in fact, with the citizenry at large." He went on to write: "A humanity which has lost its sense of responsibility has abandoned its birthright."

We have to take responsibility for our world, for our economic system — harnessing it to serve us, rather than allowing it to enslave us — and for one another. We need a fundamental reappraisal of economics, so that need and capacity, rather than supply and demand, provide our guidelines.

To quote Nurnberger again: "We are not the only ones who have a right to live on this singular planet. There are contemporaries in grinding poverty. There are future generations who must be given a chance to enjoy what we are enjoying now. There are nonhuman species which are pushed into oblivion by our mindlessness and greed. In the long run our own



**In Zambia, 30% of children have not been vaccinated. Infant mortality is 112 per 1000 births. It is the poor, diseased and orphaned people of countries like Zambia that are helping shareholders in Wall Street, Frankfurt and London get rich.**

Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

*See* **Jubilee 2000 Campaign** *page 13*

## Jubilee 2000 Campaign

**This is the ideology of neo-liberalism, of a new and more virulent form of capitalism. It is an ideology that continues to inflict grave damage on humanity; that is destroying the life chances of millions of people.**

*from page 12*





Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

**If our children are to have a future, then we must take that future into our own hands, and through education and understanding empower our people to take control over their own lives, their own economies and political systems.**

worth will be determined by the degree to which we are capable of recognizing and defending the dignity of all the creatures of God, present and future."

**Fourth,** we need systems of democratic accountability and transparency. Here in Africa, and I am sure it is true elsewhere in the South, for every step forward we take towards democratic accountability — and today 80% of Africans live under regimes that have taken the first steps towards democracy — for every step we take towards democracy, globalization forces us to two steps backward.

Much could be done in Africa if the people of Africa were in control of their own economic, political and social systems. I am reminded of the words Kwame Nkrumah in his speech to the UN in September, 1960, when he said: "The problem of Africa, looked at as a whole, is a wide and diversified one. But its true solution lies in the application of one principle: namely the right of the people of Africa to rule themselves."

We need democratic political systems in Africa, Latin America and Asia with ordinary people at the heart of our economic systems; and in control of their own economies. That is what we are struggling for under the banner of the Jubilee 2000 movement.

We want an end to government by the bankers, of the bankers, for the bankers. We want an end to government by the shareholders, of the shareholders, for the shareholders. We want for the people of Africa, Latin America and Asia, what Abraham Lincoln wanted for the people of the United States: government by the people, of the people, for the people.

I want now to turn my attention to Africa's debt. 34 of the 42 countries defined by the IMF as effectively bankrupt are in Africa. Why are these countries effectively bankrupt? There are many answers of course, and poor governance by Africa's elites is one of the keys to Africa's economic degradation. The conduct of Mobutu in Zaire, of the military regimes that ruled Nigeria, of the autocratic regimes that continue to hold sway in Africa — these leaders and their elites have failed their own people.

But I was very struck by a figure that appeared in this year's annual report from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNCTAD. According to UNCTAD, citizens living in Western countries gained $60 billion of benefit from the collapse of the oil price in 1998. A bonus of $60 billion, from the collapse in price of one commodity alone. That commodity is produced by countries in Africa — Angola, Nigeria — but also by countries in Latin America like Venezuela and Mexico. In other words, the people of some of the poorest, most indebted nations in the world have given, almost free, a gift of $60 billion to the people that live in the rich world. It's no wonder the stock market in Wall Street is booming. The rich are getting richer on the backs of the poor.

What is significant about the number $60 billion, according to UNCTAD, is that it is less than the rich industrialized nations gave to the poorest countries in aid in 1998. Of course, oil was not the only commodity whose price fell through the floor in 1998. So the gifts of the poor to the rich were more generous than just virtually free oil.

The ideology of neo-liberalism, of the liberalization of capital and trade markets, is working well in Africa in serving the interests of the rich. It's an ideology whose central premise is that the rich must be allowed to get richer, and if they need to get richer at the expense of the poorest people in the world, then, according to the ideology of neo-liberalism — so be it.

So African governments have been encouraged to open up their markets, to liberalize their trade. The beneficiaries have been rich Western traders; the losers have been African traders, mostly agricultural producers, producers of Africa's basic foodstuffs. While we in Africa are encouraged to remove subsidies from our farmers and from foodstuffs, the European Union and the U.S. continue to provide subsidies to their agricultural sectors. So when markets in Africa are opened up to highly subsidized products, we cannot compete.

According to Eurostep, a network of

*See* **Jubilee 2000 Campaign** *page 18*



Art by Rini Templeton

*Feed the Spirit,*
*Renounce the Debt*

*A Community Dinner & Forum*

**Sunday, April 16, 6 p.m.**
**Church Divinity School of the Pacific**
**2450 Le Conte Avenue, Berkeley**

Join others from the Bay Area's diverse spiritual traditions and social justice organizations in calling for the cancellation of oppressive Third World Debt. This event is held in support of the national action in Washington, D.C., against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

**Sponsored by the Jubilee 2000/Bay Area Debt Coalition & the Graduate Theological Union**

Tickets are available for $5-$10 sliding scale (no one turned away for lack of funds).

To reserve tickets for dinner call (510) 464-5921. For general information call (510) 848-1142.

For rides from the Downtown Berkeley BART to CDSP, vanpools will depart from the SW corner of Center & Shattuck from 5:45-7:15 every 10-15 minutes.

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Art by Rini Templeton

# Global, National and Local Solutions to Homelessness

## Ending the bitter legacy of homelessness will require the redistribution of income and wealth

*Editor's note: This is the second of a two-part series on homelessness by Dr. Talmadge Wright, professor of political science at San Francisco State. In the March, 2000,* Street Spirit, *Wright analyzed the systemic economic causes of homelessness. This month's installment explores the solutions to homelessness.*

**by Talmadge Wright**




**Does everybody have the right to housing, or are millions of the poorest to be left out?** Dong Lin photo from *One American Reality*

**Any solution to end homelessness must consider how to curb the excesses of capitalism and promote the democratizing of every level of society, including the economic realm.**

What can we put forward as positive solutions to end homelessness at the global, national, and local/city levels? Proposed solutions cannot be framed merely as a national problem or as a local problem, but must be thought of as a multi-dimensional problem with global, national, state, and local levels of intervention.

Local actions without global commitments remain insular and weak. Global actions without local commitments remain elitist and disempowering. Any solution to end homelessness must consider how to curb the excesses of capitalism and promote the democratizing of every level of society, including the economic realm (Blau, 1999).

### POSSIBLE GLOBAL INITIATIVES

Contrary to the globalization thesis, which maintains that all nation-states have to adjust their economies to international market demands, states are not powerless (Weiss, 1998). Governments can re-regulate capital flows and increase social investments, as we have seen in the withdrawal of Malaysia from the financial markets to curtail speculative investment during a crisis.

While the pressure from corporate elites is intense, counterpressures can also be increased. States that have maintained a strong welfare-state tradition are now doing better in both human and financial terms than those that have not, giving the lie to free market advocates. Contrary to free market polemics that criticize the extensive system of social benefits created by European countries, countries that have maintained their social wage have been able to reduce substantially their levels of poverty. This has also allowed for shaping more effective policies for ending homelessness.

While homelessness is increasing globally, it is increasing with more speed in countries that have adopted the neoliberal market model than in those that have attempted to defend their social wage while fighting homelessness. To be sure, pressures to readjust European economies have been great since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty encouraging the integration of European markets and since the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to promote free trade.

Limited privatization, wage reductions, and the cutback in some benefits have occurred in most European countries. But the degree of such free market impositions has been contested through popular protests. For now, well-organized labor unions and Left political parties have managed to hold off the Americanization of Europe. How long they can do so remains to be seen.

### PROMOTE GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND REGULATE CAPITAL

Internationally, citizens can fight back; social problems such as homelessness and hunger can be addressed, financial markets regulated, and social investment increased. A new global vision of ending poverty and homelessness can become dominant through employing mass media techniques where possible, and local, community-based organizing networks, connected internationally.

In 1966 the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights provided one of the first attempts to globalize human rights. Since adopted by 135 countries, this covenant — along with ongoing pressure for the realization of political, social, and economic rights by member states of the United Nations, human rights groups, nonprofit development groups, ecology organizations, and women's rights groups — has helped shape the current debate on taming global markets.

International social movements and global alliances of labor unions, women's organizations, homeless advocacy groups, and ecology groups can work to curb the power of international unregulated capital investments and the impoverishment of workers, and give priority to the construction and financing of low-income housing, jobs with decent wages, and decent health care for all.

Accelerated capital mobility and the threat of investment withdrawal can be blunted by international organizing depriving capital of its safe havens. Communication networks and computer programs that have helped free capital from national and local restraints can also be appropriated by activists and extended worldwide (Evans, 2000).

### REFORM INTERNATIONAL FINANCE

One step in ending homelessness globally is international financial reform (Block, 1996:266), which would return control to national economies by restoring fixed exchange rates on currency to prevent speculative financial trading, which does nothing for local populations, and restricting the free movement of capital across national borders. According to Block, a transaction tax on international currency exchanges of around one percent would reduce the $1.2 trillion dollars a day traded on the global markets; only 5 percent of these transactions are for actual trade, investment, or travel (1996: 267).

Other controls on capital could be negotiated at a new Bretton Woods-style conference of nations; such controls would encourage legitimate business, but would return more capital to governments, enabling a mere effective response to widespread social inequalities.

Reforming IMF policies of fiscal austerity, which enrich local elites at the expense of a nation's poorer citizens, would place greater emphasis on local community development and absolve poor nations of their debt to Western banks. Heavy debt loads impoverish local populations, restrict the overall rate of social development, and lead to loss of housing or inadequate shelter.

World Bank policies of fiscal soundness are already being rethought and moved away from the dominant neoliberal market model to one of sustainable development with ecological considerations; and a fundamental respect for human, political, and economic rights. This requires a new model of development that places social capital, democratic rights, and public health above investor rights.

### DEVELOP GLOBAL COALITIONS AND PROTECT SOCIAL HOUSING

The conflation of what's "good" for global market investors with the general good conceals the reality that what is profitable for private real estate developers is not necessarily profitable for those who cannot afford to live in market-rate units. Gentrification of cities worldwide is forcing the poor (Smith, 1996; Sassen, 1998) to compete for limited housing.

Resistance is possible, but homeless activists cannot resist alone. Developing strong coalitions that cross race, class, and gender boundaries, nationally and internationally, and exploring shared ideologies for a just and equitable world are essential.

Activist organizations, such as the Innen Stadt Aktion (Inner City Action Group) and the Anti-Racist Initiative in Berlin, who oppose racial discrimination against immigrants and fight to stop gentrification, can find common cause with similar groups in the United States.

Habitat II, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements held in June, 1996, developed an agenda of a right to housing, sustainable development, and "enabling" partnerships. This can also provide an ideological framework to link activist groups. The right to shelter, common in most industrialized countries, could be extended to the United States in legislation through sustained advocacy.

Many European countries have resisted strict market ideology for years and have a diversity of housing stock that evolved out of the political struggles between business and labor informed by a much stronger Left tradition than in the United States. These large stocks of social housing, which are not part of the private housing market, provide one of the most effective ways to house the poor.

From the subsidized housing units in Holland and Denmark to the social housing of Germany and Britain, various alternative housing arrangements (not part of the private market) are common, including co-housing arrangements and converted squatter buildings. The diversity of European housing stock provides many good examples of how housing policy could look in the United States.

Defending social housing and enhancing its desirability is therefore one possible solution for global housing problems. But this will require a concerted and organized effort to resist the further implementation of market-driven policies for "reform" at the expense of working people and the poor.

Similar to the Community Reinvestment Act in the United States, which calls upon banks to justify their lending practices to poor communities before expanding their markets elsewhere, an International Community Reinvestment Act could be lobbied for. It would force transnational corporations (TNCs) to invest in the social capital of the host country before they would be permitted to engage in business.

Those TNCs that showed the greatest ability and commitment to support the poor and develop local communities would be granted investment rights. Democratic assemblies responsible to regional and local populations within any given host country could guide the social capital investment offered by outside TNCs into productive channels.

### NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Organizing a "coalition around common human needs" (Blau 1992:181) will link homeless advocacy to other social change groups. To achieve a more democratic political system responsive to the

*See* **Solutions to Homelessness** *page 15*

# Solutions to Homelessness

*from page 14*

needs of the less privileged, labor would have to unite with community-based organizations and also work harder to organize the unorganized. In addition, the politics of identity would have to be refashioned with a new vision that can mobilize grassroots organizations around a populist democratic and progressive platform.

This will mean moving from the ideology of individual empowerment to collective empowerment (Wright 1997:317) and direct action. It will mean placing more resources into the hands of the poor and homeless, offering collective mobility and collective resources to the homeless. Wagner comments (1993:180), "What if the dense social networks and cohesive subcultures that constitute the homeless community were utilized by advocates, social workers, and others?"

One model of organizing that has proven effective in crossing race, class, and gender barriers, often cited in contrast to the Alinsky model, is that of the Piedmont Peace Project (Stout, 1996). Providing social services is rejected in this model, because "we work to help people understand that they can bring about change if they are organized. They can get the services they need" (Stout, 1996).

However, people living without homes present a problem in that they have no home-based community that can be organized. Therefore, organizing will work best not in conjunction with formalized, institutionalized services, but rather with small actions, such as the serving of food that Food Not Bombs accomplishes, as vehicles for bringing people together for social change, or in the defensive civil rights struggles waged by the National Coalition on Homelessness, and its locals, against arbitrary police harassment of people living on the street.

Bringing together the strategies of the Piedmont Project with those of Food Not Bombs and the Coalition on Homelessness could provide one way to bridge organizing gaps among people without shelter, homeless advocate groups, and social-change groups. Because we live in a media-saturated society, this will require establishing and using new media forms, co-opting corporate media outlets, and generating new networks to create the necessary cultural imperatives to push for change. Media campaigns can be shaped to hammer home the agendas of social change.

However, for these kinds of political changes to occur, changes in campaign finance reform must be pursued at the national and state level. Blunting the power of large lobbyists affiliated with the real estate, health care, banking, and other business sectors is necessary, as is the true democratic opening of the political process. First I would like to discuss briefly the necessary political changes and then address specific policy issues such as health care, housing, and jobs.

### Reform campaign financing

It is clear that any progressive agenda to end homelessness must have a politics in place that is responsive to an alliance between the middle classes and the poor, not to the dollars of big business. The corruption of the democratic process is evident in the massive contributions given each year through lobbying in Washington, DC. To blunt the effect of big money, lobbying reform is essential.

The recent replacement of the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act, which tightly regulated banking, finance, insurance, and real estate operations, by the 1999 Gramm-Leach Act, which lifts these regulations, comes after a sustained lobbying campaign by the finance sector. In 1997-98, this sector spent $154.4 million dollars in soft money, PACs, and individual contributions to influence congressional sentiment, according to the Center for Responsive Politics in Washington, DC.

While this one example illustrates the power of banking and finance interests, the real estate lobby works hard to maintain mortgage interest deductions on homes, effectively cutting off other options for government housing investment. In addition, campaign finance reform is essential if candidates sympathetic to the needs of the poor and homeless are to have even a ghost of a chance of winning elections. To solve the problems that create homelessness will require electing officials who are not afraid to stand up to big business.

### Change the Tax Code

The mantra of "no new taxes" is unsustainable in a civilized society. With corporate tax at an all-time low (corporate taxes were 21 percent in 1962 and declined to 11.5 percent by 1997) and a disproportionate share of the wealth accumulated in the top 5 percent of the population, a vigorous progressive corporate and individual tax system should generate the required capital for social investments.

Taxes on the assets and income of the wealthy have also declined over the past twenty years. Closing tax loopholes will be essential. The top one percent of wealthy families have managed to realize savings on average of $97,250 per family between 1977 and 1985, while the bottom 80 percent had an increase of only $221 per family (Blau, 1999:196). Changing priorities to combat homelessness will require redistribution of income and wealth.

### Progressive think tanks, media

Philanthropy and foundation-sponsored think tanks have often led the way in new policy research and supportive services. Many progressive foundations have remained hampered, however, by their support of direct service, in the case of homelessness, and direct action of activist groups, and have not invested the funds necessary to build up a collection of progressive think tanks, as various conservative foundations have created their own.

Funding new progressive research centers is just as essential as funding direct action groups, since direct action groups can benefit from the new knowledge generated by such policy organs.




**Shopping carts are the only "home" that many unhouse people in San Francisco have left.** Lydia Gans photo

**The right to shelter, common in most industrialized countries, could be extended to the United States in legislation through sustained advocacy.**

It is not a matter of either/or — both the development of new progressive think tanks and research centers and funding direct action groups are essential if political change is to occur. Changing priorities of fundraisers, an increase in private foundation commitment to progressive advocacy research, think tank development, and media/political resources to sustain a progressive vision are all important to help support grassroots efforts.

### Single-payer health care

Raising the incomes of the very poor and redesigning a health care system that delivers decent health care for all, regardless of ability to pay, is also essential for ending homelessness. The current battles with managed-care HMOs reveal the inadequacies of a health care system built in conjunction with the insurance industry, whose primary motive is to secure greater returns on investments. A single-payer health care system is most effective in providing needed services and will ultimately prove less expensive than the current system of managed care.

Providing increased health care services is essential to counteract the damage caused by homelessness, but not sufficient to stop the larger widespread impoverishment. Given the serious shortage of detox centers, mental health outreach clinics, and services for the disabled in general, ending homelessness will involve making the necessary investments in these services throughout the country.

Specialized services (mental health and substance abuse treatment, shelters, transitional housing, job training), the most common benefits allocated for the poor, are important; but without more low-income housing, higher incomes for low-skilled work, and fast, accessible health care, those benefiting from such services will still find themselves exposed to intolerable living conditions.

### Move beyond welfare reform and expand child care support

While moving people off welfare and back to work may be a laudable goal in theory, accomplishing it through punitive sanctions and strict time limits is cruel and ineffective. Given that most people on welfare are there for only a short while, many people who have received jobs through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) might have received them anyway. The poorest 20 percent of those recipients, however, have serious problems that are not being addressed by a forced work program.

The lack of systematic and widespread funding of child care centers and the lack of good, well-paid jobs ensures that even those who are removed from the welfare rolls will be stuck in low-wage occupations. Since most women who have been on AFDC and are now on TANF work as mothers, subsidized child care is essential for any work-based strategy to be successful. Such a system is not unheard of. The Kellogg system of child care implemented during World War II provided subsidized federal day care, allowing many mothers to work in the defense industry.

### Renewed federal commitment to housing, promote social housing

Following Habitat II, the United States should declare a national "right to housing" which calls for decent housing and a suitable living environment for all citizens. The United States needs to strengthen its social policy with renewed efforts to develop new, low-income, rental housing construction programs, programs that move beyond the voucher system or private-public systems for public housing.

New public housing can easily compete with the private sector in developing low-cost and attractive alternatives, not the concrete megaliths of the 1950s. This is self-evident in the new, attractive, Gautraux scattered-housing developments now being built in Chicago.

Since a major part of the problem, other than the lack of serious federal commitment, is the normal operation of the market, mechanisms must be found to curb the power of markets to distort housing affordability. For example, with the assistance of the federal government, a public capital-grant financing program could be implemented to support the development of the "social ownership" of housing (Stone, 1993; Hopper and Baumohl, 1994). This means removing permanently a portion of the housing stock from resale on the private market.

After paying for the cost of producing or acquiring the housing stock, remaining costs would be reduced to capital improvements and operations. This expansion of the "social sector" of housing would increase the stock of affordable housing while allowing other market-rate units to service high-income persons.

Social ownership of housing can be

*See* **Solutions to Homelessness** *page 16*

# Solutions to Homelessness

*from page 15*

assumed by many different entities, from local nonprofit developers, housing agencies, churches, labor unions, and other community groups with federal assistance.

### END HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

State governments can put increased pressure on landlords to stop unfair evictions, rent gouging, and housing discrimination through vigorous enforcement of the Fair Housing laws and an expansion of housing litigation and testing procedures. Fair Housing Councils around the nation are hampered by insufficient budgets and lack of real commitment from both the business community and cities in enforcing housing discrimination provisions.

State governments also can discourage irresponsible redevelopment in local areas where such redevelopment threatens to gentrify an area at the expense of working and poor people, as is occurring in San Francisco. Housing and homeless activists can have a larger impact at the state level if there is a renewed federal commitment to working families and the poor.

### RAISE WAGES, REBUILD THE U.S.

At the most basic level of reform, increasing the minimum wage is essential to providing jobs with livable incomes. Already the small increase in minimum wages has generated more income for the bottom 20 percent of the population, decreasing the poverty level by a small amount over the past three years. While a step in the right direction, this is simply not enough to compensate for the widespread loss of union wage employment in the 1980s and the middle management downsizing of the 1990s. With the increase in temporary employment, many workers have to struggle just to break even every month.

Two strategies that would help end homelessness would be a guaranteed annual income (Blau, 1992) for everyone and a new federal "living" minimum wage indexed to the cost of living within a particular PMSA or rural area, enough to sustain a single person or family at or above the poverty level, where the poverty level is redefined according to a "market basket" approach for a particular region (being poor in San Francisco is very different from being poor in rural Mississippi).

Similar to European plans, a guaranteed income plan would provide the bottom floor for sustaining a family and could replace welfare and many of the other social service programs that supported poor families who did not have sufficient income. This would also create incentives for business to pay their workers a decent salary, otherwise they would find themselves with serious shortages of labor. The second proposal would equalize wages between regions, discouraging businesses from moving into areas where land prices are high and encouraging moves into low-priced areas, raising the livelihood of depressed economic zones.

To provide immediate help to the very poor and homeless, a public works program that expands opportunities for well-paid, low-skilled labor and that addresses basic infrastructure repair integrated with community economic development could help raise people up off the streets.

Long-term neglect of basic maintenance of bridges, roads, parks, and services calls for a solution. A National Marshall Plan to rebuild America could include social investments in new housing construction, city infrastructure repair, and national health care for all.

The key is in providing not just make-work positions but ones that have a promise of a future and pay a livable wage. Job training in this context could directly link open positions in employment with needed jobs, promising continuity between low-skilled positions and ones calling for higher skills. Preferential treatment in hiring given to the poor and to people of color will also raise the income levels of the bottom 20 percent and discourage the widening split between the primary and secondary labor markets.

The cost of such a plan would be expensive at first, but would be repaid many times over in the long run through lower costs in containing social problems, improving human happiness, and increasing productivity. After all, the time when government investment was at its highest, during the 1950s, was also the period of the highest growth rate in American history.

**A national Marshall Plan to rebuild America could include social investments in new housing construction, city infrastructure repair, living wage jobs, and national health care.**

We can easily afford larger government investments. United States government expenditures have risen only 5 percent between 1967 and 1994, to 33.5 percent of the GDP (Block, 1996), far below that of European states.

The problem is not that we spend too much, but that we spent so little. Spending has actually decreased on critical physical infrastructure, constituting only 1.9 percent of GDP in 1996 compared to 2.8 percent in 1976 (Block, 1996). Japan spent 6 percent through the 1970s and 1980s, and former West Germany spent 4 to 6 percent of its GDP on infrastructure — substantially more than the United States.

There is work to be done in the United States after these many years of neglect. Making decent, well-paid jobs repairing the nation's infrastructure available to those with low and moderate skills will also provide an avenue for homeless people to get back on their feet. New housing will provide the places to live and a national health care system the necessary support services for those too disabled to work.

### LOCAL AND CITY INITIATIVES

Modest versions of all the national policies outlined above can be adopted at the state or local level. The creation of progressive coalition politics may be easier at the local than national level. Local minimum wage laws, child care initiatives, health care services, and social housing initiatives are all possible. As at the national level, they will require the election of political leaders independent of local real estate growth interests. Other initiatives are more fundamentally local.

### LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS STRUGGLES

Local homeless advocates, such as the Coalition on Homelessness in San Francisco and Chicago, are able to use the human rights perspective to educate the general public. This should not be viewed as counter to a proactive strategy (Straw 1996: 26), but rather as integral to developing a larger coalition based on human rights, social justice, and equity.

Local struggles for human rights have an international dimension and, with modern technology, can easily link up with groups in other countries fighting similar battles. Activist groups in local neighborhoods in the United States may have more in common with working-class struggles in Berlin, London, Paris, Tokyo, and Mexico than with wealthy communities within their own city. Connecting these struggles using modem communications can help provide solidarity and work to globalize the local.

### RESPONSIBLE REDEVELOPMENT

The application of "quality of life" policing to homelessness merely applies a cosmetic fix, moving social problems to less visible industrial areas. Cities can work to develop downtown areas with mixed-use housing, containing middle-class, working-class, and poor people in the same areas, without robbing the poor, working class, or middle class of available units, services, or "quality of life."

City redevelopment plans can be shaped as responsible redevelopment that recognizes the necessity to have all elements of the population represented in downtown core areas, not just the privileged — and represented in proportion to the actual composition of the employment base. This would include a renewed commitment to build more mixed-income, single-room occupancy units in downtown core areas, as well as in suburban areas. These will become important not only for the very poor but also for single working- and middle-class baby boomers who cannot afford to buy their own homes.

Democratic downtown/suburban development can state publicly the types of new employment created by a particular project and its approximate pay scale to allow for planning a proper housing mix. Gentrification does not have to displace the poor and homeless segments of the community. Responsible gentrification can upgrade a community at a gradual pace, with safeguards to protect the less privileged.

Vision statements and plans developed by local redevelopment agencies can be refashioned to represent all segments of the population, and can be assisted by grassroots movements for the poor. This will require bringing homeless advocates, not just local business elites, into the very planning process of downtown areas and in suburban areas of outlying districts.

The lack of federal funds makes it difficult for cities to reduce land costs that might attract affordable housing developers, and market models of housing only privilege the upper tier of citizens. However, the reliance upon tax increment financing (TIFs) and business improvement districts (BIDs) robs cities of necessary funds while giving developers unnecessary tax breaks. These can be reduced or reshaped to increase provisions for creating substantial amounts of low-income shelter.

Redevelopment agencies, in cooperation with state legislators, entrusted with applying 20 percent of their budgets to building affordable housing, should expend that percentage in line with the numbers of newly created low-income jobs within a city. The 20 percent figure can be amended by state legislators.

However, cities can also increase their component of low-income housing construction by increasing the amount of redevelopment funds for low-income housing in proportion to the needs within their communities. For every new business (cafes, hotels, clothing shops) that services incoming clients, a host of low-income jobs will be created. City development plans can take this into account through their Environmental Impact Reports and push to build housing that can accommodate service workers near the site of new businesses, preferably within walking distance.

Setting up Housing Trust Funds for low-income housing is one solution, but a better solution would be controlled development that balances the numbers of low-income housing units created with the number of jobs being proposed.

An example of lopsided redevelopment is the plan for the Mission Bay development in San Francisco, which promises up to 31,000 jobs, but only 6,000 housing units in a city with an extremely low vacancy rate and the highest housing costs in the country. This will put even more pressure on the already squeezed housing market and certainly price the working poor out of San Francisco and make it impossible for people without shelters to get off the streets. A more rational redevelopment plan would allow for equal proportions of housing and jobs within a two-mile radius, to reduce transportation costs, in a mix proportional to the types and pay of jobs created.

### DEMOCRATIZE & SUPPORT SHELTERS

While shelters are not the answer to homelessness, new shelters should be supported as an interim measure. Existing shelters can be encouraged to end restrictive shelter practices that treat homeless families and individuals in a degrading fashion, and can be supported to the extent that they have initiated democratic procedures of accountability for their patrons.

In addition, such shelters can be maintained in downtown areas or in those areas where support services can be best organized, but not encouraged to relocate to degrading industrial areas or "refuse" spaces (Wright, 1997: 101-11). Cities would be pressed to provide needed social services on a fair and equitable basis (Wolch and Dear, 1993), with smaller shelters in all neighborhoods and a firm opposition to NIMBYism. There is always room for supportive services, like shelters, but we should not assume that they constitute lasting solutions to homelessness.

### LIVING WAGE ORDINANCES

Cities can also enact "living wage" ordinances to improve the wages of city workers. In addition, preferences for minority-owned businesses can be built into city contracts for services to assist people of color, who make up the disproportionate number of poor in the inner cities.

Given the advanced deterioration of infrastructure in most major cities, public investment in massive repairs employing both skilled and unskilled workers at a decent wage will allow the poor to accumulate the necessary income to provide for their families. With increased income, poor communities will be able to take care of many of their own. The decline of wages within minority communities and poor white communities over the past 30 years has meant a concurrent decline in the viability of social networks (Roschelle, 1997), contrary to the earlier findings of Stack (1974). The increase of such wages will not only help the working poor, but also strengthen family networks.

### A BOLD POLITICAL MOVEMENT

While these proposals for global, national, and local solutions may seem utopian — read "unworkable" — I have drawn many of these examples from diverse social experiments already underway in various countries. This is a vision of where we might go, if not a finished plan. Any struggle to end homelessness will involve an open-ended process of conflict between competing political and economic interests involving gender, racial/ethnic, and class conflict. These cannot be defined adequately ahead of time, but will emerge in the process of social change through collective empowerment.

What is clear is that ending the bitter legacy of homelessness will require substantial changes in the strategies of capital accumulation, not just simple reform. To press these initiatives will take more than wishful thinking or even coalition building. It will take determined politics.

A critically conscious political movement willing to take bold steps will have to emerge — a movement that calls into question the dominant strategies of neoliberalism and fights for the rights of working people and poor people everywhere, a movement connected deeply to grassroots activists who are mobilized to struggle globally and locally.

# Panhandling into the 21st Century

*from page two*

ty in your face" are somewhat more complex. The widely varying responses are, in turn, politically motivated, law enforcement-based, spiritual, compassionate, or fascistic. These responses are efforts to answer an underlying question: Is that thing under the blanket an eyesore, a human being, expendable, or maybe invisible?

Each person, I believe, depending on class, culture, history, race, education, and political affiliation, has a different response, and this might be the root cause of our quandary. We cannot find consensus as to how to end poverty and homelessness and respond to its most visible prodigy, the panhandler.

People who beg for survival or to feed their addictions or to supplement their mediocre wages are seen as the failures of this great country — let's write them violations until misdemeanors become felonies and put them in jail where we seem to be warehousing everyone who seems like a threat to this great society.

Whether to criminalize panhandlers or to allow them the right to beg, sleep, lie, or sit in our streets has been at the heart of calm and heated debates in the history of the United States, going back to when Europeans began settling here. The presence of beggars on the streets of U.S. cities is as old as the United States itself.

Let us look beyond the 20th century into the next, knowing that we will have the resources needed to address any issue, however entrenched, with the great wealth that has been created in recent years. It is my fear that, depending on our spiritual, intellectual, political, and economic values, we will push for different responses in public policy as well as different community responses. As a nation and as a community, we could either go in the direction of higher levels of criminalization or treat the presence of homeless people, including panhandlers, as a public health and housing issue.

Knowing that we will see more people begging as the gap between the rich and the poor increases in the next 10 years, now would be the time, with the coming of the first presidential election of the new millennium, to engage the candidates on this particular issue.

President Clinton's New Markets Initiative smacks of creating consumerism and does not address the root causes of poverty and homelessness. I remember his trip to Africa; and his trip to the deep South recently was a response to the need to create new opportunities for corporations, to create new markets. Both fall short of finding a cure for AIDS, ending hunger, housing everyone, providing humane treatment to the mentally ill, ending domestic violence, decriminalizing drugs, and creating work opportunities for everyone to the best of their capabilities.

During this past August, I took walks and drives around three cities, a personal journey as a resident of my community. One sign that particularly moved me was held by a young woman, who held the sign so it covered her face. It read: "You will never know my shame or my pain or my name… a quarter goes a long way."

The cities I chose to explore were Berkeley, San Francisco, and Oakland. I did this because I am familiar with the approaches the three cities have taken in responding to panhandling and I've worked in all three during the span of almost 30 years of being an activist for the protection of the human and civil rights of street people. The streets I walked were Telegraph Avenue, Shattuck Avenue, Solano Avenue, and 4th Street in Berkeley, Broadway in Oakland, and Market Street and the streets running into Market in San Francisco. I also checked out the Civic Center areas of all three cities, as these have been or are being revitalized and the policing and harassment of homeless people is on the rise.

**The efforts of Mayor Jerry Brown to avoid addressing poverty in his city is short-sighted. As Oakland attracts businesses and people of higher incomes, the new arrivals will push many of those currently housed out into the street.**

Over the 30 years that I have lived in the Bay Area, the mayors, city councils, and county supervisors in all three cities have taken different positions at different times regarding panhandling, aggressive behavior, sleeping in doorways, and sitting and lying on the streets — depending on the numbers of homeless people, the prevailing politics, the reactions and responses of businesses and residents, and activist strategies.

Oakland, up until the election of Mayor Jerry Brown and the arrival of City Manager Robert Bobb and his Grime and Crime Initiative, consistently took a humanitarian position on panhandling, aggressive behavior, etc., and used laws already on the books if there was a problem. Merchants in Oakland tried different things — signs in windows, or washing the sidewalk with someone asleep in their doorway — but Oakland showed compassion over criminalization.

The ongoing efforts of Oakland Mayor Brown to avoid addressing poverty in his city and its resulting implications is short-sighted. As Oakland attracts businesses and people of higher incomes, the new arrivals will push many of those currently housed out into the street, causing a similar effect as gentrification in San Francisco.

San Francisco has a lengthy history of trying a myriad of strategies, including the famous Matrix Program initiated by Mayor Frank Jordan, to remove people from the streets. The legacy of this program remains; the situation is horrendous and surprising, as the city receives large chunks of federal money to address the needs of street folk.

It is impossible to walk the streets of San Francisco without feeling anguish and pain for the suffering that is visible. It proved to me that the stick, the sweeps, and all the other strong-arm tactics that have been used in San Francisco do not work.

In 1994, the *East Bay Express* did a piece on "The Great Berkeley Panhandling Debate." I encourage people to read that piece again. Panhandling continues in all three cities, but I believe that there is only debate in private, behind closed doors — closed doors in city halls and police departments — and there is little dialogue with the larger community. The problem is quietly deemed unsolvable.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Berkeley City Council considered various measures to crack down on homeless people, including Measures N and O, which ultimately were not implemented. But that has not stopped Berkeley and UC police harassment of homeless people.

The disappearance of large numbers of our young homeless folks in 1999 was a clear example of the misuse of power. Many young people were arrested, many just bullied out of town — for how long?

The ongoing efforts of Berkeley's City Manager to remove homeless people from view are well known amongst homeless folks and their advocates. Checking for outstanding warrants is a frequently-used strategy, and people "do the revolving door" through the jails and hospitals, costing resources that would be much better spent on housing and other needed services.

The dawn of the new century beckons a better future for all Americans. We need to debate and discuss these issues openly. We deserve to challenge our souls and polish our minds so we may find solutions to poverty.

boona cheema is the executive director of Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS), a nationally awarded nonprofit agency in the Bay Area that fights poverty and homelessness through economic development, community building, housing, and support services.

## Shakespeare's Lear Said…

**by Michael Creedon**

**"poor naked wretches… that hide**
**the pelting of this pitiless storm…"**
**Said Shakespeare's King Lear, chiding**
**Himself for having paid too little attention to**
**The plight of the homeless and dispossessed**
**In his equally savage times as ours.**
**And I'm there too, reproaching myself**
**For not doing what I can easily do, but**
**Aren't I doing all I can? I don't know.**

**What can I do to help? — Speak up**
**On their behalf, tithe them what I can,**
**Befriend them in person on the street, and**
**Don't let my personal shame add**
**To their undeserved shame,**
**Society-imposed. Can I**
**Do this? Yes I can — and so**
**Can you. This judgment**
**I do pass on all of us:**
**Help one another.**

## San Jose Protest

*from page six*

care of their kids. All those doing service jobs will not be able to live in this area."

Melinda, her six-month-old son, and her husband have been homeless for three months. They enjoyed the meal at the Fairmont, saying, "We're going to go up to the room that was reserved and just sit back and enjoy the little piece of heaven that we do have." Melinda, an administrative worker, said she'd become homeless because she couldn't afford the rent and was in a winter homeless shelter slated to close on March 31.

Patricia Vayez and her two children, 7 and 16, became homeless to make room for a new office being constructed downtown.

Leading a passionate prayer to the group, Rev. Wagers declared: "We claim that justice in our city will flow down like water like the prophet has said. We claim housing and dignity for all of God's children. No one in this city will be left out. Somehow we can come together and win the battle. No one again will have to go hungry here amid this wealth. And no one will have to die amid the wealth of San Jose. We can move hearts and minds to transform people to see the truth about you and your children!"

Police were low-key and made no arrests as managers scurried back and forth trying to negotiate a quick end to the luncheon. In a bid to hustle the homeless convention out of sight before tea at 3 p.m. (from which the homeless group could not legally be barred), Fairmont General Manager Fred Hampton personally put up one night's rent money for Melody and Haas Kincaid and their two children, Joanna (age 10) and David (age 7).

Hampton also promised to contact Mayor Gonzales, which he later did, and commented, "even my employees can't afford housing here in San Jose."

Hampton's call and the pressure of three homeless protests produced results. Within two weeks, Mayor Gonzales had called Rev. Wagers to set up an early April meeting and a City Council member had also agreed to meet with the persistent protesters. Wagers emphasized that CHAM's demands were unchanged:

- Stop the criminalization of the poor.
- Shelter beds for all.
- $5 million per year to house people earning minimum wage.
- A realistic long-term homeless plan.

After filing up to the room to inspect the luxury quarters for the homeless family of four, the protesters peacefully left, giving the Fairmont Hotel three stars for effort (though one diner noted that the management had hastily snatched packets of salt out of reach when he came over to request a little seasoning for his soup).

In addition to opulently subsidizing the Fairmont Hotel, the San Jose Redevelopment Agency has lavished public money on a variety of luxury projects: the Convention Center ($230 million); the Sharks Arena ($152 million); the Tech Museum ($80 million); Adobe Computers ($18 million); IBM ($18 million); the Hilton Hotel ($18 million); AMC Theaters, which has since closed ($14 million); the Sharks Practice Rink ($10 million); the St. Claire Hotel ($9 million); the Fallon House Museum ($5 million); and the De Anza (3.6 million).

"Obviously money is not the problem," Rev. Wagers told the crowd. "It is this city's priorities which must be changed."

On March 28, CHAM reappeared outside the Fairmont Hotel in the more highly visible Fairmont Plaza and served food again to more than 100 homeless people. Wagers announced that Mayor Gonzales had agreed to a face-to-face meeting to be held in early April. Wagers said a Tent City would be erected outside the mayor's office during the course of the meeting to provide alternate lodging for homeless participants should housing and shelter negotiations with Gonzales be unsuccessful.

At presstime, CHAM was planning further protests, starting with a mass visit to the office of Redevelopment Agency boss Susan Schick. Wagers predicted dining out with the wealthy would become a weekly tradition. Such giants as Adobe, the Arena, Cisco and other corporations holding conventions can look forward to Fairmont lobby picnic visits from homeless people in the months to come.

Hours after the Fairmont Plaza luncheon on March 28, Wagers reported that more than 100 people were turned away from the official city shelters that night. Just in time, CHAM revealed that the First Christian Church had reopened its sanctuary to shelter for the homeless again.

Two years ago, CHAM and the First Christian Church had defied San Jose officials by putting up homeless families inside the church, and had refused to bow to city pressure to evict them. Fighting back with a will, church members had successfully pressured the previous administration of Mayor Susan Hammer into finding long-term housing for 50 people.

Emptied under pressure from city officials last summer after two years of defiant service to the poor, First Christian was given written assurance then that any applicants for shelter at their church should be sent by taxi over to the Emergency Housing Consortium — a system that now has apparently broken down.

Once again, First Christian Church's leaders have evidently decided that the needs of homeless people outweigh the threat of renewed city retaliation against the courageous inner-city church.

**For more information, call: First Christian Church and Rev. Scott Wagers: (408) 345-2353; CHAM (408) 454-0378. To contact San Jose Mayor Ron Gonzales: (408) 277-4237.**

## Jubilee 2000 Campaign

*from page 13*

European NGOs, the European Union is the largest producer and exporter of milk and has 60% of the world market. These subsidized exports of European milk powder are wreaking havoc in the dairy industries of Jamaica, Brazil and Tanzania. In Jamaica, for example, imports of EU milk powder skyrocketed once the government "liberalized" the milk market in 1992. In a few months local production plummeted, as a result of European subsidized competition. There is no level playing field here; and countless farmers have been ruined.

Many West African countries — Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana — after "liberalizing" their markets in the mid-1990s — have been literally flooded with the heavily subsidized European product. In most of these countries the domestic tomato industry has collapsed, ruining countless farmers and leading to the failure of several local enterprises. The dumping of European beef in the Sahel countries and more recently in South Africa and Namibia is having the same consequences.

The poor are being robbed of their self-sufficiency, and their right to fair trade. The poor are supporting and financing the rich. This is not just immoral; it is amoral.

It is amoral because the poor that are financing the rich are doing so while enduring disease and epidemics. As Prof. Jeffrey Sachs has pointed out, these are unparalleled in Africa since the Bubonic Plague of 14th century Europe. The enormity of the AIDS epidemic — or is it a pandemic? — in Africa is indeed a new kind of Bubonic Plague. It's reflected in one significant fad: businesses in Africa have had to introduce policies to limit the number of funerals their staff can attend during the week. Now if you work in a company based in Africa, you cannot afford more than one funeral a week.

Take Zambia, for example, which spent more than 30% of its national budget on debt repayments to the rich West throughout the 1990s, while spending roughly 10% of its budget on social services. In Zambia, 20% of the population is now HIV positive, and it is estimated that nearly 10% of all Zambian children under 15 have lost a mother or both parents to AIDS. Half of all Zambians have no access to safe drinking water. Thirty percent of children have not been vaccinated. Infant mortality stands at 112 per 1000 births, compared to 5 per 1000 births in the United States. Most shocking of all, life expectancy in Zambia is expected to fall to 33 years in the next decade; whereas in most Western creditor nations, life expectancy is in the high 60s or 70s, and rising.

It is the poor, diseased and orphaned people of countries like Zambia that are helping the shareholders in Wall Street, in Frankfurt and in London to get rich. And it's the poor, diseased and orphaned people of Nigeria, Angola, Zambia, Tanzania that are forgoing health care, clean water, sanitation to repay debts to rich Western creditors. This is an economic system which is the logical outcome of an ideology that places money values above human values. That elevates greed and accumulation over compassion and generosity. That promotes the interest of a tiny minority — the rich — over the interest of the great majority of the poor.

This is the ideology of neo-liberalism, of monetarism, of a new and more virulent form of capitalism. It is an ideology that is unsustainable, that has within itself the seeds of its own destruction. However, it is an ideology that continues to inflict grave damage on humanity; that is destroying the life chances of millions of people in Zambia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe; as well as in Indonesia, in the Philippines, in Russia, in Ecuador, in Peru and in Argentina.

If our children are to have a future, then we must take that future into our own hands, and through education and understanding empower our people to take control over their own lives, their own economies and political systems.

We have to challenge this ideology that encourages the idolatry of money and wealth. We have to challenge it with our own humanity, our own compassion. Above all we must challenge it by joining hands across continents, by linking up with like-minded people in the North and in the South; by standing together. We should always be guided by the famous "Lund" principle: "Never do alone what we can do together." "That we may be one as we are one." — *John 17: 11*

Here in South Africa, we thank God for the high level of solidarity that existed among various communities, national and international, during the liberation struggle, as well as their continuing cooperation in our new role as midwives of the transformation process in Southern Africa. This solidarity extended through the anti-apartheid movement in Europe and the U.S. that challenged the bankers, politicians and transnational corporations that backed the apartheid state. Our friends in Europe and the U.S. engaged with power; and challenged what was being done in the name of European and American citizens.

We need to continue building and constructing high levels of solidarity in our struggle against an international financial system that robs the poor, and rewards the rich. We need to encourage compassion and humanity in people around the world; and through cooperation and mutual support to build confidence in the great human values of love, compassion and generosity.

I know we can do this. I know that already the Jubilee 2000 movement is doing this; that we are a movement that has stung the conscience of world leaders; that has united people of good faith across the world. That has challenged the idolatry of money. That has educated and informed millions of people in the workings of the international financial system. That has achieved real and practical debt cancellation.


# SHUT DOWN
## the IMF & World Bank




## GLOBALIZE LIBERATION
### NOT CORPORATE POWER

## Come to Washington!
### Mass Nonviolent Direct Action
### April 16-17
### IMF/World Bank Headquarters
### Washington, D.C.

**The Mobilization For Global Justice is planning large-scale, well-organized nonviolent actions to shut down the IMF/World Bank meeting on Sunday and Monday, April 16-17. Hundreds of people will risk arrest and others will take part in legal demonstrations. We will oppose the right claimed by those coming to the IMF/World Bank meetings to make undemocratic, unaccountable, destructive decisions about millions of lives and the earth itself. We will nonviolently and creatively block them from meeting.**

### JUBILEE 2000 RALLY — Sunday, April 9

**Activists from around the world will gather on The Mall in Washington, D.C., to demand the cancellation of the crushing debt of poor countries.**
Contact: David Bryden, Jubilee/2000 USA; (202) 783-3566, www.j2000usa.org

### FESTIVAL OF RESISTANCE — April 8-15

**Activists will converge on Washington for a week of street theater, performing, nonviolent trainings, meetings and teach-ins on the World Bank & IMF.**
Contact the Mobilization for Global Justice for more information.

**Mobilization for Global Justice**
**1247 E. Street, S.E. Washington, DC 20003**
**Phone: (202) IMF-BANK. Website: www.a16.org**


## The Hate Man

*from page 11*

*will seize space if you see an opportunity.*

**HM:** Definitely I'm pushing the envelope. But I'm still tip-toeing. I'm cautious. But right. I want to find where the spaces are, where the leeway is, to get what I want.

**Ace:** *Do you find a lot of street people don't know where that line is, so they either don't push it, and limit themselves, or they blunder too far in the other direction, thinking: "I can do anything I want, man!"*

**HM:** Well, I think that what gets mixed in is defiance. Resentment. I just want to be myself. If I can get away with that, to me that is a major achievement.

*(Schwiller returns)*

**Schwiller:** Yeah. I think so.

**HM:** Okay. But shut up! Let me KEEP DOING THE FUCKING INTERVIEW!

**Ace:** *Do you find it odd that you're someone that goes around saying "I hate you! Fuck you!" and yet, basically, you're accepted by people?*

**HM:** I'm cautious. I don't push it on people. I don't speak to people first. If someone comes up to me and says, "How's it going?" I'll say, "Bad." Then if you say, "Why do you wear different shoes? Why do you wear a dress?" I'll say, "Now wait a minute. I don't trust you unless you say, 'I hate you.' " Since you initiate it, it's not like I'm knocking on your door trying to sell you a Bible or something.

**Ace:** *What would you say is a mistake that a lot of street people make in the way they're operating?*

**HM:** Pissing in people's doorways. Getting obnoxious. Getting in people's faces. That's heavy. And that's pissed off society. Society is basically pissed at the outdoor scene largely because of that.

**Ace:** *Do you feel just by being respectful towards other people that that saves you from a lot of the "oppression" that a lot of street people get?*

**HM:** Yeah. I'm satisfied to be outdoors. Beyond that, I feel I'll take care of myself. When I was crashing behind this one building, the tenants would come out, and I won't even look at you. If you're allowing me to crash there, and not calling the cops or going to the manager, that's enough for me. Another strategy is to separate out the functions. I'll crash in one place. I'll read a book somewhere else.

**Ace:** *Me too. I'll score my newspaper at one coffee shop. I'll table-score food at another restaurant. I'll use the bathroom at another place.*

**HM:** Break it up. Then if I lose one function it doesn't jeopardize the others.

**Ace:** *Any final words?*

**HM:** No. That's it. Fuck you. Have a lousy day.

# Fighting for a Just Cause in Oakland

*from page five*

these kinds of repressive measures like his anti-blight campaign and his crackdown on young people. At the Black Radical Congress meeting I attended last Saturday, they were telling me about all the young people who are under tremendously stepped-up harassment and arrest by the police. These are terrible kinds of off-shoots of Brown's and Robert Bobb's repressive policies.

Brown is out to show that he can whip this city into shape — that he can get rid of violence, get rid of poor people, and turn the city into a shining example of high-rise towers filled with people who make in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Robert Bobb, on the other hand, is going to whip this city into shape by making it succumb to all of his repressive nightmares. Both are interlopers from outside who really have no right to come into Oakland and do the things they're doing.

Brown, after he became mayor, considered bringing in his own person as city manager. But he decided very quickly, "No, I'll leave it like it is and we'll play good cop/bad cop." Now, Robert Bobb only reports to Brown. So Bobb has to do what Brown says, as opposed to having to satisfy the various council members as he had to do before the strong mayor proposal passed.

So now Jerry has decided, "Okay, I'm going to push Robert Bobb out there to be the public front person doing all these repressive things: he's also a black person. In the meantime I will sit back, and I will look like I know nothing about this while I'm condoning all these things."

So it's a double whammy that the people of Oakland are now suffering under as a result of Jerry Brown's election and Robert Bobb coming into town.

**SS:** *A lot of activists in Oakland have conjoined two words, Jerry and gentrification, to decry the Jerryfication of the city. What does that word mean to you?*

**JV:** It means that we are in an era now where there are going to be significant changes made in Oakland — not because they're changes that people want. These are changes that Jerry Brown is *imposing* on Oakland. The loss of diversity from gentrification is going to be very harmful.

The plans that Jerry pushes means that people who work in Oakland, people who do the day-to-day services — firemen, policemen, teachers, union people, civil servants — are not going to be able to afford to live here. All the people who make the city run are going to have to live elsewhere and commute into Oakland. That's going to be very bad. I think that's going to mean the loss of diversity festivals we have; I think it's going to mean Chinatown will take on a different character. A lot of the people who helped to make this a vital city are going to be out.

**SS:** *So the just cause ordinance is one of the ways that activists are fighting back against gentrification under Jerry Brown. How did you structure the ordinance?*

**JV:** In framing the ordinance, we worked very closely with a group of lawyers, and we bent over backwards to be fair to landlords. We feel that if landlords choose to go into that business, then they have the right, as the courts say, to a decent profit, a fair return on their investment. As the owner of rental property, landlords have certain rights. What's been missing up to now is that tenants' rights have not been respected.

So we've tried to restore some balance while recognizing that not all tenants are good tenants. On the same side, we know that not all landlords are good landlords. We've structured the ordinance in such a way that it gives the landlord nine clear reasons that are justifiable causes to evict.

In all those cases where a tenant is doing things a tenant should not do, like damaging property, they are given an opportunity to make repairs. If they don't make the repairs after being requested to do so, then the landlord is justified in evicting them. If they don't pay their rent after being given a notice that they owe it, then the landlord is justified in evicting them.

We do allow a landlord to move into his own place. We also give the landlord the right to move in certain close relatives: son, daughter, father, mother. Landlords can move a spouse or domestic partner into a unit they own. Finally, if the landlord has to vacate a unit to do upgrade or repairs caused by code enforcement, that is a reason to evict.

But in all those cases, we feel that it is a tenant's home and tenants have rights. So if a landlord has to evict because of code compliance, then that tenant has a right to move back after repairs have been made at the same rent. If the landlord moves his family in, then the landlord has to pay all relocation costs, and offer the tenant another unit, if they own one, at the same rent. If they don't own another unit, they must pay relocation costs plus two months rent so a tenant can get started in another place.

We also put in special protections for the elderly and disabled and sick people. A person who is 60 years old and has lived in a place for 10 years or longer cannot be evicted — unless the landlord has to use that unit for his mother who is more than 60 years old. That's the only situation where a landlord can evict an older person. Same with a person who is disabled: if they have been a long-term tenant they cannot be evicted. If a person is catastrophically ill and has lived there five years, they cannot be evicted.

So we're trying to observe the dictate that you promoted long ago: Housing is a human right. And people who rent houses should be treated no differently than people who own houses. That is their home, and they should be respected just as much as if they were paying the bank to live there.

**SS:** *It sounds like a fair and thoughtful approach. What's been the response from landlords?*

**JV:** Well, the landlords have targeted us for attack, and they're using an old argument that you're very familiar with: "Here they go again trying to impose Berkeley-style rent control on Oakland!"

So that's their line. They've put out a letter to their membership saying, "We need money to fight this vicious attack." So they're saying contribute generously. Their letter says that every time you want to evict somebody, you're going to have to go to court to evict them and that's going to cost you thousands of dollars. So why pay thousands of dollars to the court for every eviction, when if you deposit one of those payments of thousands of dollars with us, you can stop this thing.

It's a terrible line they're taking. But we know they've been put on the defensive by this measure, and they really can't defend themselves. They cannot deny the eviction statistics; they cannot deny that rents have risen 20 to 34 percent in one year, and that people are being pushed out of Oakland.

This ordinance is an attempt to stop the hemorrhaging. We think it's a last-ditch try on their part to try and retain their unlimited power; but we're going to push this forward because housing is a human right.

**SS:** *But money does talk in elections. What must be especially galling is that landlords are funding this anti-tenant campaign with all the money they got from the high rents they charge. They're using tenants' own money against them.*

**JV:** That's right. That fact alone should anger tenants enough to make this petition pass. We are paying for our own oppression. I think we need to say to landlords, "Enough!" Let's call a halt to it and pass this ordinance and show the landlords we're going to stand up for our rights.

**SS:** *What are the prospects for getting the just cause ordinance on the ballot?*

**JV:** I think the prospects are very good. One of the things we have to overcome is getting the word out to people. Almost everybody has an eviction story, has a relative who has been evicted, knows somebody who has been evicted, and fears the possibility of eviction any day. So they will gladly respond.

What we are lacking right now is getting enough volunteers into the campaign who are out collecting signatures. We have to step up the number of volunteers. But we're very confident that we will get it on the ballot in November.

# Another Giuliani Victim

*from page three*

Ferguson's. If I were to end up with a police bullet in the head after my next arrest one can be sure that Giuliani and Safir would refer to me exactly as I'm described in police records — a "chronic offender" and "repeat misdemeanor recidivist."

According to police reports, Ferguson ran into his building after being confronted by the police. Was this a futile attempt to escape being arrested by six cops who probably knew him and which apartment he lived in, or did Ferguson have another reason to run? Was he in fact running because he was afraid for his life?

In March, 1999, Ferguson had been arrested on the same block and charged with selling marijuana. According to a lawsuit filed on his behalf, during the course of the arrest police officers severely broke Ferguson's hand and then denied him medical treatment for many hours while he was being processed. It was only when an EMS worker noticed his serious injury that he was immediately taken to a hospital and scheduled for surgery.

According to Ferguson's mother and attorney, his death may have had something to do with filing complaints to the citizens' review board and a notice of claim for a $5 million lawsuit against the police.

According to *Newsday*, a police source says Ferguson died with his hand inside a jacket pocket. Like Amadou Diallo, he had no weapon of any kind. The police officer who did the shooting claims he and Ferguson were struggling, an explanation that appears less than credible in light of the police report indicating that the deceased man's hand was inside his jacket pocket. More likely is that Ferguson was attempting to get rid of any drugs and that the officer thought he was reaching for a weapon. Since the only two witnesses to the actual shooting were the officer and Ferguson, the officer's version can never be proven wrong.

The police had been focusing on Ferguson's building for some time and were well aware of him. According to Commissioner Safir, there had been 38 arrests inside the building at 1045 Boynton Avenue and Ferguson himself had been arrested seven times inside the building or while standing on the block.

According to Giuliani, the building's owner had signed an agreement with the NYPD giving them permission to arrest anyone on the premises who was not a resident of the building. Can one imagine the landlord of an apartment house in a white neighborhood signing such an agreement granting the police a similar suspension of Fourth Amendment rights?

It's likely that of the 144 arrests the police claim to have made on Ferguson's block, most were for so-called trespassing or possession of marijuana, the two most common misdemeanor arrest charges in NYC's minority neighborhoods. These arrests are part of the "Broken Windows" philosophy, as are arrests for graffiti, public urination and drinking, for which tens of thousands of young African-American and Latino males are arrested in NYC each year, put through the system and given criminal records that place them on the fast track to being classified as "career criminals" like Malcolm Ferguson.

Once they are officially unqualified for any job due to their arrest record and begin selling drugs to survive, they are repeatedly arrested, sentenced to prison and end up, like Malcolm Ferguson, as parolees with limited civil rights. These arrests and the seemingly impressive crime statistics thereby generated are then used to justify hiring more cops, building more prisons, stiffening sentences, eliminating parole and otherwise bolstering the prison-industrial complex that Giuliani is a prime advocate and architect of.

The public is sold the idea that this policy is somehow making the City safer and that Giuliani is to be congratulated. Does repeatedly harassing, frisking and arresting young minority males for victimless, nonviolent and in many cases non-criminal activities make society safer?

Does putting someone in prison for dealing dime bags of marijuana have any effect on drug use, on the big business of importing drugs or on the major drug distributors? None whatsoever.

When the mayor told the latest graduating class of police officers that they were "social workers," he was telling them the truth. For Giuliani, social work involves humiliating, degrading and criminalizing minorities and making minority communities civil-rights free zones.

The mayor points to statistics to prove his notion that the NYPD is "the most restrained police force in the U.S." These statistics are an illusion, partly caused by the fact that there are eight million residents in this City. Spread out over so many people, an occasional shooting of an unarmed person may seem to some to be a statistically acceptable ratio, especially once the victim is portrayed as less than human.

One can be certain that if those being shot by the police were white residents of Park Avenue with political connections, even one such shooting might end up being the cause for Giuliani's resignation and a retraining of the entire NYPD.

The larger issue is not whether this police officer was justified in firing his weapon or whether the four officers who shot Amadou Diallo were in fear for their lives. The issue that needs to be investigated by the Federal government is the Giuliani policies these officers are being forced to carry out, in many cases against their own protests.

If Giuliani is elected to higher office it will be on the backs of the victims of police brutality, civil rights abuses and racism. Those who support him based on these policies should ask themselves if they'd feel the same way if they were black, if their own sons were being shot down and if their neighbors had to fear being unjustifiably stopped, searched and interrogated whenever they walked down the street.

Robert Lederman is an artist, a regular columnist for the *Greenwich Village Gazette* [See: www.gvny.com/ for an extensive archive of Lederman columns] *The Shadow*, and *Street News*, and is the author of hundreds of published essays concerning Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Lederman has been falsely arrested 41 times to date for his anti-Giuliani activities and has never been convicted of any of the charges. He is best known for creating hundreds of paintings of Mayor Giuliani as a Hitler-like dictator.

# Marian Residence

*from page one*

"I knew a lot from volunteer work I did in the past," she said. "But it took me three months... to get over being scared, to get out of the door."

One of the features of the Marian Residence and the women's shelter at St. Anthony's is a policy that affords residents time to recover and revive, rather than insisting that the women set goals and start to take action based on a generalized timetable of recovery. This policy stems from the Franciscan philosophy of charity that calls for meeting people where they are and trusting them to develop at their own rates.

Lorraine's story also exemplified the combinations of problems that drive people into homelessness. While many homeless people lose the support of their families, Lorraine said her family has helped her as much as they are able. Free bus transportation for the disabled allows her to visit them frequently.

Lorraine's goal, she said, is to become an advocate for people with disabilities, like herself. "If I won the lottery," she said, "I'd spend the money on services for disabled women and men."

***In a study of 777 homeless parents, the majority of whom were mothers, in ten U.S. cities, 22% said they had left their last place of residence because of domestic violence.***

***Sexual abuse against disabled girls and women is roughly twice as high as for non-disabled girls and women. Considering that 33% of American women experience domestic violence, a conservative estimate says that at least 60% of disabled women have experienced it.***

*— National Coalition for the Homeless and National Coalition Against Domestic Violence*

Lorraine said that while she was living in a shelter, before she came to St. Anthony's, she was raped.

The second speaker, Ana, came to the United States from Nicaragua as a young woman who had two babies and was married to a man much older than she.

"I knew only a few words of English my husband taught me, like 'bus,' and how to say my address, so I wouldn't get lost," Ana said. "Otherwise, I could say nothing to nobody."

The family's transition to the United States transformed her husband into a batterer, she said. "When we came to the U.S., he changed completely. Anger and frustration set in. I became extremely abused."

"I started dreaming about killing him," Ana said. She left him several times, but she kept coming back.

"I went back because of the kids and my role to keep the family together. Many times I ran with the kids, only to find brick walls, empty spaces, and deep holes. People were giving me bad advice and I said to myself, 'No way I'm going to make it.' I'd bring the kids back to him, with pain in my heart. Can you imagine the pain?" she asked the audience.



**Rosabel Asencio, a resident of Marian Residence, and Nani Wilson, staff supervisor, in the garden of the transitional home for homeless women.** Lydia Gans photo

***The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence divides the barriers for leaving a violent relationship into three major categories: lack of resources, institutional responses, and traditional ideology. Among the barriers are:***

- ***having at least one dependent child;***
- ***no employment outside the home;***
- ***fear of losing their children;***
- ***being socialized to believe they are responsible for making a marriage work;***
- ***being taught that their identity and worth depend on getting and keeping a man.***

"In my culture," Ana said, "the woman is always at fault if the marriage is in trouble. Everything was my fault. To this day, my children blame me for what happened. The beauty of a woman in my culture is as a wife and a mother. And that is all."

She forced herself to stay away from her children at times when she believed her husband would kill her if she returned. "I slept sometimes in the street," she said. "I begged for food and money. I didn't know what to do for myself or how to get help."

One key to her survival was a childhood friend who took her in for short periods of time and always offered encouragement. Ana said that encouragement was crucial to her struggle to find solutions for herself that enabled her to combine safety and freedom. Her friend would say: "Look at how far you have come. Give yourself credit."

This mantra of support, she said, along with the help she found at The Marian Residence, has allowed her to rebuild her self-confidence and her hopes for the future. Still, she said, the scars of domestic violence never go away, and her anger has become a tool for survival and a burden.

"Can you imagine my situation?" she asked, passionately. "Can you imagine to be out on the street, and you know no one, and you cannot speak the language?... And you don't even know that what is happening to you is wrong. Because I thought that what was happening to me, what my husband was doing, was my fault."

She explains that immigrant women who come to the United States often have no idea how different the standards of behavior are from their country of origin.

"In the United States, you have much more freedom for women and much different ideas about what women can do," she said. "You don't say, 'It has to be this way for a woman.' A woman can make decisions for herself. She can have her own friends, she can make her own life."

Ana added that if anything would have made a difference in her story, it would have been timely, accessible, Spanish-language information about housing, domestic violence, and women's rights. She needed that information, she said, the moment she arrived in the United States. She wishes she had known that domestic violence wasn't legal. She also wishes she had known how to exercise her legal rights.

Sometimes, she said, the police would identify her, and not her husband, as the source of violence in their family. She wishes there were more programs to help immigrant women, and insists that such help needs to be available in forms that are tailored for particular cultural, economic, and social needs.

Ana said she believes that the freedom to make one's own way in life is the best protection against both domestic violence and homelessness. Women need room and the tools to find their own way in the world, she explained. "If you love the bird, then set it free. That is an expression I think you have heard in English. Every woman needs to have the chance for her own life. I want to be free."

Ana admits that she is still afraid of her former husband.

***The Bureau of Justice reports that although divorced and separated women comprise only 7% of the population in the U.S. they account for 75% of all battered women and report being assaulted 14 times more often than women still living with a partner.*** *— National Coalition Against Domestic Violence*

The third speaker, Anita, faced a lifetime of drug and alcohol addiction after surviving incest and rape as a girl and as a teenager. Her first child was conceived as the result of rape. She was raising her daughter as a single mom and volunteering for a domestic violence program in the Midwest, when a combination of stress and mental illness led to her being evicted from her home.

At that point, Anita said, she found herself among the thousands of women in the United States for whom rape and sexual abuse contribute to a downward spiral of addiction and isolation. These problems combined with a lack of affordable housing, safe shelter, and affordable health services to drive her into years of being economically and socially battered.

"I gave birth to three children," Anita said in a soft voice, in a subsequent interview. She added that a doctor recently told her that she is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, a diagnosis often applied to people who have lived through war and to survivors of sexual violence.

***Homelessness and poverty are inextricably linked. Poor people are frequently unable to pay for housing, food, child care, health care, and education. Difficult choices must be made when limited resources cover only some of these necessities. Often it is housing, which absorbs a high proportion of income, that must be dropped. Being poor means being an illness, an accident, or a paycheck away from living on the streets.***

*— National Coalition for the Homeless*

At the Marian Residence, Anita said she has found the strength to express herself.

"I've been able to get into art, to talk to people one on one," she said. "I've had my lows. And I miss my highs. But I've learned to stabilize myself with medication (for a bi-polar disorder). I didn't want to take medication before. I started drinking and drugging in high school, and a doctor told me I was doing this to medicate myself, because of the rape and incest.

"Homelessness is like a fork in the road. There's a lot of help out there, in some ways. Except there's no actual housing. And the waiting to find housing or help, it's like being in prison. The best thing is to move from San Francisco."

***San Francisco has the highest rental rates in the country. The average studio costs $1000 per month, and the average one-bedroom unit costs $1500 per month, requiring a salary of close to $17 per hour just to get by. Minimum wage is $5.75 per hour. San Francisco has almost 15,000 people on the waiting list for public housing, and nearly 10,000 on the list for rental vouchers. A room in a Sixth Street hotel costs $600 per month (up from $450 only a few months ago), while the maximum GA payment is less than $400 per month. About 3000 people who receive Social Security benefits because of disabilities that prevent them from working are homeless in San Francisco. The monthly benefit is less than $800.***

*— St. Anthony's Foundation, San Francisco*

Anita, who is currently attending college, said that women face particular problems with homelessness that come from being raised "with the idea of taking care of yourself and taking care of your home." She said that when she was first made homeless, she needed timely reminders and advice about things she had to do to keep from losing custody of her daughter.

"So many people have helped me along the way," she said. "But I needed friendly, timely advice about what I had to do when I was too stressed out and scared to keep track of things myself."

Anita said that over the years anger has always pulled her out of defeat. Friendship at the Marian Residence has also helped. She credits her social worker there with providing the right amount of support without pressuring her before she was ready to change. "We need support from the outside world," she said. "I don't mean financial. I mean emotional. People need to get to know us."

She said it scares her that even though you can do a great deal for yourself in a program like the one she's in, you still can't expect to find housing.

## SURVIVE

**by Lisa Levin**

**In transition, haste makes a dangerous ally.**
**We drink bad gin for heat of a remembered warmth.**
**This winter we all go hungry and eat small dirt.**
**Foraging, I sometimes wonder what you taste like.**
**All morning, I carry my mother's word in my pocket**
**Lile a black rock egg: Survive.**
**Can you show me veins of silver in the earth?**
**At the foam's edge, can we play...**
**We make a force hard to confine**
**Take our shirts off to the moon and know no master.**
**Wheels creak, wolves cry.**
**Cranes skim this river, Lapping heaven**
**Let me hold the curtain for you... Watch the lamp.**

## Help For Battered Women

**If you are being abused or battered, you are not alone. There is help available and people who will understand your situation. Nobody deserves abuse. You and your children have a right to safety. The following programs can help.**

**CALL FOR HELP:**

**Domestic Violence Crisis Line Bay Area: 415-831-3535**
**Woman, Inc. Information & Referral: 415-864-4722**
**Asian Women's Shelter: 415-751-0880**
**La Casa de las Madres: 877-503-1850**
**Teen Crisis Line (for battered teens): 877-923-0700**
**Domestic Violence Prevention Hotline: 1-800-540-5433**
**Women's Refuge: 1-510-547-4663**
**A Safe Place: 1-510-536-7233**